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# Spiritual Growth

NO MAN comprehends God in this world or out of it. No man escapes God. No one can live in this world unmoved by God. In the present dispensation, every man's position before God remains *unfixed*. If a man's union with God is not being progressively intensified, then he is retrogressing from his first love. Life is essentially bound up with movement; it is an approach toward a goal. A man is stable — not static — to the extent that he makes a relentless effort to attain an object beyond his reach — “a pressing toward the mark,” as St. Paul calls it.

This consistent growth of one's spiritual life is absolutely necessary. If one ceases to advance toward God, he is moving away from the source and end of his life. If he stands still, he stagnates. If he accepts the *status quo*, his present achievement, as ultimate, he disintegrates and undoes all that was previously well done.

When you know what a man is made of and what for, you can expect a certain kind of behavior and growth, and you will know how to measure his growth in terms of his goal and endowments.

## Supernatural Goal

The last end of the human being is union with God. And it is charity that unites him to God — “Whoever abides in charity abides in God, and God in him.” Christian perfection, therefore, consists essentially in charity. When a man's love of God is perfect, he is perfect. The end, which is charity, admits of no measure. But the end need not, in fact cannot, be achieved immediately. It may be achieved one way or another. And there are degrees of love. To love God at all is already, in some sense, to possess Him. “The lowest degree of divine love is to love nothing more than God, nothing contrary to God, nothing as much as God. He who does not reach this degree of Christian perfection in no way accomplishes the precept” (Cajetan). The precept referred to is the command “To be perfect . . . to love God with the whole mind and whole

heart." The highest possible degree of union with God is that enjoyed in the Beatific Vision; the highest possible in this life is that of mystical experience, which is enjoyed in the prayer of contemplation. When Cajetan speaks of the degree of perfection compatible with the present life, he says it demands: "... the exclusion of everything repugnant to the movement of love toward God. This is realized when a man excludes from his affection not only everything incompatible with the existence of charity, such as mortal sin, but also everything that prevents the affection of the soul being directed wholly on God."

Contemplation, which is an experimental, loving, and ineffable knowledge of God, is the supreme means of attaining the perfection of charity. "For how shall a man attain to the perfection of charity, if he does not keep himself habitually in the presence of God, and has not the attention of his whole soul fixed on Him and primarily on Jesus Crucified in such a way as to pass through the wounds of His humanity into the intimacy of the divinity?"

The goal of supernatural life then for every baptized person is *mysticism*, a loving experimental knowledge of God, intimate union accomplished through sanctifying grace — the same grace that all of us possess — the theological virtues, and the gifts of the Holy Spirit.

Mysticism is not to be identified with the accidental phenomena of visions, locutions, miracles, or any other extraordinary modes of divine communication. The essence of mysticism is love, intimate love.

Mystical contemplation, in its highest degree, is thus the term or goal of the Christian life. Although it is a free gift of God, St. John of the Cross assures us that it will be obtained by those who, progressing in perfection, dispose themselves for it.

After all, will not our Lord keep His promises? "He that loves Me shall be loved by My Father: and I will love him and manifest myself to him. . . . My Father will love him and We will come to him and make Our abode with him" (Jn. 21:23). And this infused knowledge and love by which God reveals Himself is essentially the same beatitude the blessed enjoy in heaven. "For this is eternal life: that they may know Thee the only true God, and Jesus Christ whom Thou hast sent" (Jn. 17:3).

No wonder this intimate knowledge of the Holy Trinity and of Christ, the Word Incarnate, opens up infinite depths of joy and peace to the contemplative Christian. "These things I have spoken to you that My joy may be in you, and your joy may be filled. . . . Peace I leave with you, My peace I give to you. Not as the world gives do I give unto you . . ." (Jn. 14:27). The joy of the contemplative is consummated in perfect union: "The glory which Thou hast given Me I have given them; that they may be one as we also are one: I in them and Thou in Me, that they may be made perfect in one" (Jn. 17:22, 23).

### *Supernatural Endowment*

If a man would use with maximal effort his supernatural equipment "stirring up the grace that is within him," he would come in a short time to know God by experience, which is contemplation. Contemplation is the result of a normal full development of supernatural life. Contemplation may not and need not always be felt; but it is present where there is healthy spiritual growth. Where there is no contemplation, there is stunted growth, for contemplation is nothing more than the actuation and gradual development of the theological virtues and the gifts, particularly wisdom.

Is a man adequately equipped to reach these normal but towering objectives of the spiritual life? Even a meager consciousness of our supernatural organism ought to convince us of the affirmative answer to this question. The resplendent, ineffable life of God unfolds within the soul of every baptized person. Grace is the cause of that inner life.

It is by faith and the sacraments that a man is first confronted by God, introduced into the living Mystical Body of Christ, endowed with power from on high. At that first contact with God, a man is imbued with perfections of an immeasurably higher order than he could hope to achieve by a lifetime of moral effort. By grace man partakes of the intimate life of the Godhead, not because he has rendered service to the Deity, but because he is the object of divine Love who gratuitously bestows upon man an incomparable and free gift to which he has no right. God not only takes the initiative in the spiritual life of men, but He sustains

and dominates the whole progressive movement of the human being to the divine Being.

Man is equipped by nature with a rational soul comprising the faculties of intellect and will. He achieves natural perfection by employing these powers upon their proper objects in the business of knowing and loving. By the infusion of grace a whole new supernatural world is opened up. The soul is divinized in its essence through a participation in the divine nature, and the faculties are simultaneously elevated by the virtues and gifts. The performance of these supernatural powers or "habits" perfect the grace-endowed soul, as knowing and loving perfect it on the plane of nature.

These virtues and gifts make up the faculties of man's new supernatural being. By means of them he can learn to inhale and exhale in a manner that is inexpressibly wonderful because it is divine. For, as Thomas Merton put it: "Then he shall be constantly breathing with the very breath of God, that is to say, he shall receive into his soul the 'spiration' of the Holy Spirit, and he shall mystically breathe this divine Spirit of love back into God, since the Father and the Son, dwelling within him, breathe forth their mutual love into his soul. Their love for Him becomes His love for them." Human intimacy with God is founded upon this sublime mystery of the indwelling of the Blessed Trinity in the soul.

"Come then, thou soul, most beautiful of all creatures, that so greatly desires to know the place where thy Beloved is in order to seek Him and be united with Him; now thou art told that thou thyself art the lodging wherein He dwells, and the closet and hiding place wherein He is hidden. Thus it is a matter of great contentment and joy for thee to see that all thy good and thy hope are so near thee as to be within thee, or to speak more exactly, so near that thou canst not be without them. . . . What more desirest thou, O soul, and what more seekest thou without thyself, since within thyself thou hast thy riches, thy delights, thy satisfaction, thy fulness, and thy kingdom, which is thy Beloved, whom thy soul desires and seeks? Rejoice and be glad in thy inward recollection with Him, since thou hast Him so near" (St. John of the Cross, *Spiritual Canticle*).

Catechism awareness of what happens at baptism is not enough.

It is necessary to consider the gifts and promises of God in their integral beauty. To be born again to the life of children of God does not mean only to be converted to the state of grace, but to be completely despoiled of the false self, to renounce creaturehood completely, and to adhere perfectly to the will of God.

Contemplation will not be given to those who wilfully remain at a distance from God, who confine their interior life to a few routine exercises of piety and a few external acts of worship and service performed as matter of duty.

### *Faith, Hope, and Charity*

Grace makes a man, at least potentially, like Christ. At baptism one becomes Christ, and so in a way prolongs His Incarnation in the world. But he has got to become Christ in reality, growing up in Him, putting on His mind, conforming to Him, achieving the fullness of His stature. What is needed is that our merely human activities should become imbued with the waters of eternal life flowing from the fountain, planted by God within the soul; or to speak more strictly in the words of Dom Aelred Graham: "The soul with its twin faculties of intellect and will — the *mens*; the theologians, the seat of divine life, the habitat of grace, the focal point of all personal union with God — being divinized by the infusion of grace, should dominate the whole man, as is the natural right, shedding the light of heaven upon each of his actions" (*The Love of God*). This is what it means to really become Christ. It does not happen overnight. It involves growth — a long arduous process of maturing.

The best way to grow is to act like Christ — a tall order. It is our supernatural organism makes us tall men, Godlike men. So we can act like Christ. Faith, hope, and charity enable us to do so.

*Faith* empowers a man to know God in the manner that Christ knows Him. By faith he envisions his final goal; he sees all again in the background of eternity, thanks to the divine perspective; in reality he shares with Christ.

*Hope* is a push Godward. So awed by the dark vision of God engendered by faith, so overcome by the transcendence of the mighty and majestic God, a man could not even begin to aspi-

to union with Infinite Goodness unless he were moved and goaded on to bold and daring aspirations by the virtue of hope.

*Charity* is union with God. It is to love God in the manner that Christ loves His Father. It unites and transforms the human person into Christ.

Of all the powers possessed by a grace-endowed soul, charity is the greatest, being, as it is, the bond of all the others and their crown. In all creation, there is nothing superior to the supernatural love of God, except the light of glory possessed by saints in heaven.

"This charity is not just a succession of good deeds, but a vital tendency implanted in the secret depths of the spirit which moves, in the light of faith, upwards toward God in passionate longing and outwards toward our neighbor in unceasing good will and enlightened activity" (*The Love of God*).

It is by the activity of the dynamic theological virtues that men achieve *spiritual growth* — the progressive enlightenment of the mind and enlargement of the heart. This kind of development depends most of all upon charity.

### Growth Through Love

God is life (Jn. 14:6). He is also love (Jn. 4:16). As the supernatural life of man is a sharing in the divine life, so charity is a sharing in the infinite love of God. To be endowed with supernatural life is to possess supernatural love — "the charity of God is poured forth in our hearts by the Holy Spirit who has been given to us" (Rom. 5:5). As physical life is inevitably expressed in movement, so spiritual life is expressed in love; and life is strong to the degree that love is ardent. Life is given to us in grace, and grace, if we are responsive and generous, will unite us more and more intimately to God in love. And although charity is a free gift of God, we are ourselves in a very large measure responsible for the degree and intensity of our love, for the increase of charity is a reward merited by our correspondence with grace.

If there is no growth of supernatural life it means there is no love. Lifelessness is lovelessness. Whatever impedes or hampers love weakens life. Whatever enkindles love engenders life.

## Godliness

It is not enough to know how magnificently God has enriched the human person with supernatural life, granting him a Godlike mode of existence. One must inquire how this *seed of glory* maintains and develops its rather precarious existence here below, pending the attainment of full fruition and unending quiescence in the light of the Beatific Vision. Generally speaking, there are two positive ways: through the instrumentality of the sacraments, and by the acts of the virtues themselves.

## The Sacraments

The sacraments are the divinely chosen channels of graces. They are charged with the saving, healing, ennobling power of Christ's Passion, and so the Fathers of the Church have figuratively described them as so many rivers of grace flowing from Christ's side on Calvary.

God has mercifully chosen to draw man to Himself according to his nature — taking him as He finds him. He finds him more prone to material things than to spiritual things and so without doing violence to his weak nature He graciously woos and entices and draws him to Himself by material things, corporeal and sensible signs; but signs which have the marvelous power of effecting what they signify.

It is through the sacramental system, the liturgy — “primary and indispensable source of the true Christian spirit” and of spiritual growth — that Christians not only give glory to God but share His glory as they grow up in Christ.

“The Christ-life of the Mystical Body is functional, operating through the organism of the Sacraments, which impart, protect, develop, and fulfill the Divine Indwelling.

“In *Holy Orders*, the visible Priesthood of Christ is preserved until the end of time, when the fullness of the Mystical Body is consummated. By it chosen men are anointed by the Holy Spirit to be progenitors and preservers of the Christ-life, and so we call them Father.

"In *Matrimony*, the force of nuptial love is incorporated into the redemptive, sacrificial love of Jesus for His Mystical Body, and spouses become the ministers of Christ, one to the other, for the furtherance of that work which secures the extension of the Mystical Body.

"*Baptism* is the sacrament of the second birth, establishing the divine life in the soul, and incorporating the recipient as a member of Christ's Mystical Body.

"The *Eucharist* is the Sacrament whereby the Mystical Body sacrifices itself in union with Christ's sacrifice, and receives therefrom the fruit of the Sacrifice for its sustenance and the development of its perfection.

"The sacrament of *Confirmation* exists to confer upon Christians a share in Christ's priestly power for imparting the means of grace to others, especially in Christian education (parents in the home, Sisters in the school, imparting Christian knowledge to their charges), and in the works of Catholic Action, bringing into society Christian principles.

"In *Penance* and *Extreme Unction*, the Mystical Body has the means of repairing and restoring the Christ-life to its sinful members, and of repairing the losses it sustains from sin." (Rev. Benedict Ehmann: *The Sacramental Way*.)

And there is above all the great central action of the Church's whole liturgical life, the Mass, in which Christ lives on in the world and in time and by which He draws all things to Himself.

It is in the Mass that we are united to Christ from whom all graces of contemplation flow. Our Lord is, in fact, the very embodiment of contemplation — a human nature united in one Person with the infinite truth and splendor of God. We become liturgists and contemplatives at the same time as we grow in the participation of Christ's divine Sonship; and that participation is granted to us eminently in the Mass.

In the Eucharist Jesus gives us Himself, "the way, the truth, and the life." And so the Blessed Sacrament is not a sign of contemplation; it contains Him who is the beginning and end of all contemplation. Should not then the grace of Holy Communion be one of the most normal ways by which normal people come to enjoy contemplation?

### *Mental Prayer*

The purpose of mental prayer is to activate and exercise the theological virtues of faith, hope, and love so that by their growth and development we can achieve the goal of human life: union with God.

It is one thing to make isolated acts of faith and love; quite another to acquire the habit of faith and love. This is the function of prayer. Faith becomes functional in prayer and with repetition it becomes habitual — we can live by faith. Prayer is an expression of faith. And what is faith? St. Bonaventure defines it as a habit of the mind by which we are captivated (or drawn willingly) to the following of Christ. What happens when we begin to advance in prayer? — Information becomes conviction; outline of Catholic Faith becomes an experience; objective truth becomes a subjective experience. Prayer is theology lived. God is a person, not just a three-letter word. The process of becoming a saint is the process of falling in love. In *mental prayer* truth becomes excitingly interesting; God reveals Himself. Remember what our Lord said about our being His friends and no longer just servants? Why? Because He shares His secrets with us. The saints are not sterilized beings devoid of feeling and interests. They are torches aglow with the fire of God's love lighted in prayer. In prayer, Christ becomes progressively fascinating. We are haunted by His beauty even ancient, ever new.

Because we have come to know Him in prayer we fall in love with Him. It is in the heart to heart conversation of mental prayer that love is expressed over and over again, and thus flamed into intensity. We gradually live by love — and hence achieve dynamic spiritual growth. That is why St. Alphonsus, St. Teresa, and Pius XII spoke so unequivocally: "It is morally impossible for him who neglects meditation to live without sin."

"He who neglects mental prayer needs not a devil to carry him to hell, but he brings himself there with his own hands." So not a superfluous nicety, but a basic necessity.

"It must be stated without reservation that no other means has the unique efficacy of meditation, and that as a consequence, its daily practice can in no wise be substituted for."

## Unworldliness

The other indispensable means of spiritual growth is a reasonable organic, lifelong program of self-denial. Even for the bare subsistence of grace and charity a systematic asceticism or self-discipline of some sort is necessary. For growth and development it is absolutely imperative, since detachment from the things of the world is a condition *sine qua non* of advancement in the love of God. "Love not the things in the world. If any man love the world, the charity of the Father is not in him" (1 Jn. 11:15).

Contemplation will be denied to a man insofar as he belongs to the world. He belongs to the world who allows the world to diminish and divide his love of God. To this extent the world becomes a rival of God. He who divides his affection is not ready — because not empty and receptive — to receive the Holy Spirit who is the Love of God. As St. John of the Cross says: "Two contraries cannot coexist at the same time in the same subject."

Only by progressively, sometimes ruthlessly, ridding himself of love of creatures can a man be filled with love of God. This is true not because creatures are not good; they are very good. It is true only because every man has an uncanny habit of attaching himself to creatures and consuming his energy in a purely natural enjoyment of them. And if a man is deliberately attached to a single thing that is not God, even a trifle, he cannot be attached to God; there will be little progress in perfection, and a very slender sort of spiritual growth.

St. Francis de Sales explains this quite clearly. Since we are finite beings, he says, our capacity for love is limited; hence before our hearts can contain a greater love of God they must be further drained of attachments to creatures.

Our Lord is even clearer: "No man can serve two masters; for either he will hate the one and love the other or else he will stand by the one and despise the other. You cannot serve God and mammon."

## Two Movements

There is then a twofold movement in the Christian life: one

toward God, one away from creatures. It might be better to refer to them as two phases of one movement of the soul to God. The one — movement toward God — is positive and it is accomplished by the development of grace, charity, and the gifts. The other, away from creatures, is negative; it is a purification, a process of detachment carried on by mortification and renunciation.

The love of God, the positive factor, being the end, is first in intention, motivating, determining, and guiding every step along the way. But since divine love can only enter into a heart that is stripped bare of all selfish affection for creatures, then the work of purification is first in practice.

Both factors are always involved in the life of man with God. One does not wake up one day to the spiritual life and decide to be positive or negative about it, bright or dull, gay or lugubrious. One must take brisk, daring, joyous steps toward God; and at the same time stride deliberately, painstakingly away from the world. So there are positive and negative, bright and dark aspects that color the spiritual life of every human being.

If a person thinks a great deal about the *effects of God's love* in himself he is going to come out of his meditation walking like a giant, singing like a Julie Andrews, bursting like spring; for he will be engaged by ideas that not only provoke thought but quicken the spirit; astounding, elevating ideas like: a man's supernatural organism, his unspeakably wonderful endowment, his divine equipment, his capacity to know and love God and to share His divine nature, to become an intimate member of the family of God. A man cannot be keenly aware of his exalted, noble condition without being impressed, enthused, and amazed.

If, on the other hand, a person thinks predominantly of the *demands of God's love* he is likely to come away from his study a bit overwhelmed. He will be tormented with thoughts like: God is infinitely and supremely good, the only object worthy of all my love. He is a jealous lover, brooking no compromise, no cheap bargaining. And that means an irrevocable commitment, absolute surrender, total dedication. And the trouble is that it cannot be done with one bold reckless gesture, performed once and for all and then pleased in. No, it has got to be made and renewed and sustained until death. God's love is devastating, a fire consuming

all that natural life a chap would like to hang on to, the few harmless attachments to creatures, the persistent hankering for things of earth. What this means is a ruthless rooting up out of the heart things he has grown too fond of; clearing the road of all that does not facilitate and quicken his steps toward God. And this means discipline, self-abnegation. A man might be just a bit bogged down by the awful burden of such devouring love.

But this negating, and therefore negative aspect, has got to be faced manfully and serenely. This serenity can be achieved ordinarily by turning the other side of the coin, and being recharged by the dynamic, positive factors of the spiritual life: just remembering who started this whole business, and how He will bring it to an end that is happy, joyous, delightful beyond the reach of human dreams, and how in the meantime it is His strength and love and life that sustains us.

### *The Value of Spiritual Growth*

It is evident from all that has been said thus far that without steady, consistent progress in perfection there can be no personal fulfillment. Neither can there be a worthwhile contribution to society and a leavening of the mass of humanity.

*Nemo dat quod non habet.* Christianity is the fire that Christ came to light in men's hearts and spread through the world. If a man is not aflame with this fire he will not radiate. If an organization is interested in nothing more than a routine, minimum Christianity, how inane the claim of its members that they are engaged in Catholic Action.

Maturity, in the natural plane, is necessary before a man can render appreciable service to others. While immature he must concentrate on his own development. Now, perfection is the maturity of the supernatural life; and it is only as men approximate it that they wield those supernatural powers and energies necessary for re-establishing the kingdom of Christ at the crossroads of the world.

One perfect Christian glorifies God more than thousands of imperfect chosen people. A single act of love on the part of a perfect soul is more pleasing to God than the sum total of all the

incomplete acts of love proffered by those who are not perfect. According to St. John of the Cross: "An instant of pure love is more precious in the eyes of God and the soul and more profitable to the Church than all other good works together, though it seems as though nothing were done."

But remember: he said *pure love*; and before one can do very much of that kind of loving he has got to go through the dark, purifying nights of contemplation. It is just such intrepid warriors and lovers the world needs to withstand Satan. That is why one day the devil appeared to St. John Vianney and confessed openly: "If there were four more men like you in the world I, Satan, would be finished; and my evil forces in the world overcome."

We need perfect Christians, perfect priests, perfect religious, perfect parents, students, officials, workers, employers. If anyone wishes to contribute something valuable to the world, the Church, his country, mankind, he must start with himself by subsuming everything else within the great-souled, absorbing pursuit of transforming union with God.

Accordingly, even the apostle's first concern must be not to enlarge his field of activity but to deepen his interior life. "He that abides in Me, the same shall bear much fruit. . . . Seek ye first the kingdom of God."

This is so very true that one good hermit in the desert can change the world, while pretentious organizations, comprising vast numbers of Christians, performing multifarious activities, fail to accomplish anything.

### **Stunted Growth**

Actually, there is a heavy supply of failure for which to account. Why has paganism won control of the greater part of the world? How has Communism flourished for so long? Why has Christianity had such a meager, paltry impact upon our contemporary society? Christianity has not failed. But in itself it is an abstract thing, and as such it is quite helpless and useless. As G. K. Chesterton put it: "Christianity has not been tried and found wanting; it has been found difficult and left untried." *Untried*. There's the rub. It has got to take root and come alive and grow in individual lives — in homes, offices, schools, shops, courts, and so on.

If Christian forces have not yet permeated and shaped our institutions, it is primarily because of the stunted spiritual growth of individuals. The seeds of spiritual greatness are planted in every Christian soul at baptism. But seeds must grow and develop before there can be a harvest. There are thousands of Christians walking about the face of the earth bearing in their bodies the infinite God of whom they know practically nothing.

The seeds of sanctity and contemplation have been sown there by God, but they lie dormant. They do not germinate. In other words: sanctifying grace occupies the substance of their souls, but it is never stirred up and sent flowing out to inflame and irrigate and take possession of the intellect and will. God does not manifest Himself to these souls because they do not really love Him.

They are men divided between God and the world. God rules over them substantially, but their thoughts and desires do not belong to Him. They belong to the world and to external things. Consequently, the Spirit of Truth cannot be received "because they see Him not, nor do they know Him."

Precisely because of the stunted growth of the individual there is a lack of inner force in those agencies that have for their purpose the promotion of Christ's principles and His way of life. And this is so in spite of the obvious external strength of these agencies — their brave speeches, impressive programs, and crowded conventions. It is even a mistake, as the Vicar of Christ tells us, to judge the vitality of a parish by the *number* of communicants.

We have great organizations that do not spread Christian influence because they lack interior force and vitality. Many groups use up their energies in bridge, bowling, and bazaars. They may have no spiritual significance at all. If not, they only reproduce secular societies, wield only secular influence. Organizations that promote successful dances or athletic teams, and are slightly, if at all, concerned with the Christ-life of the members, or with the mission of spreading the life of Christ, are a sheer waste of time.

### Action, Fruit of Love

This strong emphasis on inner growth does not mean that a Christian ought to care for his own soul and let the world go hang. Neither does it mean that a man must be a saint *before* he

can be an apostle. On the contrary, a Christian must grow more and more concerned with the world. He must also act as an apostle intensely and untiringly not *after* he has reached spiritual maturity, but *while* he is maturing; just so long as his output is not beyond the strength of his growth. The primacy of the interior life is one of *order* more than *time*. (This main question of spiritual growth through social action is handled superbly by Donald Thorman in this issue of *Spiritual Life*.)

Activity without contemplation is blind. But activity that is not feverish is, or should be, an aid to contemplation. Activity can be purifying and sanctifying. Inherent in the daily lives of extremely busy people and in the apostolate itself is a wide variety of elements that can raise the mind and heart to God, that can mortify and humiliate as well as inspire, and thus provide a ready-made program of asceticism that will ultimately lead clear-seeing, strong-willed men and women to the pinnacle of all human achievements, namely: spiritual matrimony with God.

Charity, a virtue hidden in the soul, becomes apparent to the world in action. By their fruits you shall know them. Our Lord gives us the right to make external activity a test of the genuineness of our love of God. There is nothing in the world more divine, declares the Pseudo-Denis, than to become a co-operator with God in the salvation of souls.

The important thing to remember is that all human activity must be motivated and crowned with love. *The apostle*, whether he be priest, religious, or layman, *must have a reason for everything he does, and that reason must be Christ*.

Cardinal Lavigerie, a famous missionary Bishop, spoke terrifying words to his priests: "You must be fully convinced of this, for an apostle there is no middle way between complete holiness, at least in desire, sought after with fidelity and courage, and absolute perversion."

*Father William of the Infant Jesus, O.C.D.*

*The author is one of the men most responsible for the growth of the liturgical revival in America. Father Reinhold's first book, The American Parish in the Roman Liturgy, will soon be published by Macmillan.*

# Spiritual Growth: A Progressive Sharing of Divine Nature

(2 Peter 1:4)

Father H. A. Reinhold

THROUGH created grace the uncreated source of sanctification, the Third Person in the Trinity of Father and Son and Holy Spirit, makes real what the words of St. Peter so starkly propose. It is a fact that has to be believed by supernatural faith. It transcends our natural powers of cognition. Few are privileged to have an experience that clearly and undisputedly raises them to that altitude which St. Paul calls *tritoe ouranos*, the third heaven. He is unable to put the experience into human words, nor can he himself distinguish whether his body shared this experience or not. It was an experience of more sublime character than such states as the imprinting of stigmata, or the mystical phenomena that the world finds so fascinating, which the true mystics like St. John of the Cross regard as initial stages to be transcended.

No man among us common mortals who live, or hope to live, by faith know by experience if this state has anything in common with the beatific vision. The witnesses indicate that it is a mere foretaste of what no eye has seen, nor ear heard, nor of what has come into the heart of man, but has been prepared for them that love Him. This *koinonia*, this "having or holding in common with" God His very nature (Preface for the Feast of the Ascension) is proclaimed the goal of the Incarnation: "Who in full sight of the Apostles was raised into heaven in order to make us sharers

of His Divinity." This is the "theandric" condition of the re-deemed. By baptism all are introduced into this divine life. This is therefore the basic fact which constitutes the Catholic "way" of sanctification.

All sacramental life is in *genere signi*, built on reality-carrying symbolism. The Church uses the most vital language which equals in its realism the Canticle of Solomon. For instance in the Great Night at the Blessing of the Font: "Make fertile this water, readied to beget men anew by the hidden (arcana) commingling of His Divinity (numen), that, after conceiving sanctification, from the stainless womb of the divine spring, reborn into a new creation, as heavenly offspring may emerge . . . that Grace as Mother (materni gratia) may bear all into one childhood" (infantia here carrying the overtones of dependency, muteness in the face of God's holy Fatherhood). There is also the emphatic "una," the oneness into which are all to be born. When this preface was sung for the first time, perhaps in Leo's day around A.D. 400 or before, this *koinonia* was obviously very much alive in the mind of its composer.

### Contemplation, Fruit of Sacramental Life

It seems, at least on a corporate level, that Peter's statement: "sharing divine nature," was borne out by practical faith at one time in the Church, the things about which the Preface "hymns and sings," are real on the level of faith, but nobody claimed that they also must be experienced to be real. Is there then, apart from the symbolic, sacramental life that normally does not include a conscious and "felt" awareness comparable to a mystic experience, an unrelated and independent mystic life, properly so called? Do liturgical prayer and private prayer grow on different branches of the common tree?

This is a burning problem. Many religious have asked this question in one form or another. We attend at daily Mass, receive daily Communion and share in other parts of the liturgy like the solemn praise of God in our office, in common or in private. Since these exercises are prescribed by law, we have a tendency to regard them as a burden patiently borne in filial obedience. Yet, in our hearts we think of mental prayer as the prayer that really

mobilizes our interior forces. For centuries we now have had systems and methods for this prayer. A few reach the state of acquired or of infused contemplation to which Holy Communion as well as a Rosary may be the spring board, if I read the writers correctly. Recently contemplation has been held up before a large public as the promised land of monks and nuns, nay of devout people in the world.

A well-known writer in this field once complained about the condition he had observed: that the breviary seemed to mean nothing to those who strove after contemplation. It was unrelated to the true spiritual life and really a form of mortification *via* unquestioning obedience. The late Dom Anselm Stolz has taken care of this problem in his classical monograph and shown that true contemplation in the religion of Incarnation and of the sacraments is essentially a fruit of this sacramental life. By its character and its explicit form the office is however part and parcel of the sacramental system of the Church, an outgrowth of the Holy Eucharist and a continuation of the Mass through the day.

Nor is justice done to either the contemplative life, or to the sacramento-liturgical life if we resort to the well-known method of using bits and snatches of Scripture selected by momentary intuition as *Points d'Appui* to kick ourselves off or to be raised into a soaring position of contemplation. This method is, of course, neither bad nor forbidden, but that is not the question: it would remain accidental to the liturgy and not be an answer to the problem how to integrate practical symbolism into the road on which we safely travel to God the Unknown and Unseen. God forbid that we should suggest that such use of the liturgy were illicit: we envy the person who journeys thus light-footedly through earthly life, while the rest of us plod along on the low road. It would be strange, if the religion which is founded on the Incarnation and which seems to live by sacraments regarded these basic things as destined for those who are as yet *psychikoi*, dull and fleshly, while the *pneumatikoi*, the enlightened and spiritual, use the more excellent way of St. Paul's. It would be as if the two lives ran parallel, never meeting but in the Infinite. The sacraments would then become a device that serves the less spiritual, because they needed *visibilia*, while the more spiritual are already swept

forward toward the *invisibilia* and only by humility and charity submit to the ways of the common folk, as Christ submitted to John's baptism. In this fashion of thinking the liturgy would become an exercise of humility, a condescending to the level of the multitude. And what does this make of the Incarnation and Crucifixion, if we follow the thought to its logical conclusions? Does there not lurk behind this mentality a faint tendency of crypto-Platonism? A mild contempt for the things of the senses, however concealed it is, may be the beginning of Manicheism.

In the commonly practiced method, the liturgy provides a kind of peg to which one can latch one's prayer, few and far between in the flow of sacred texts. A word, a phrase, an image or a tune provide a platform for a higher plane where one's spirit soars above sound and print. Of course there is a way of rationalizing. We take refuge in the "Church": *she* prays and praises in unending hymns; the heavenly bridegroom, and for this praise our voices provide the equipment. Considerations like these and a general intention of "doing what the Church does" may raise us above the distaste and the feeling of dissatisfaction which otherwise possesses us all too easily. What we hear and read remains largely unrealized and unfulfilled as far as our own heart and mind are concerned, but the "Church" makes up for it: again the fruit of this performance is born by obedience and sacrifice of the will, rather than by the liturgy itself. The breviary should therefore be kept next to the hair shirt and the discipline.

The meaning of the breviary texts is however eucharistic in the sense that it spreads the foremass and the proper of the day and season over the day in regular intervals in order to incorporate our whole life into the glory and praise rendered by us in the only acceptable sacrifice of the New Covenant. This attitude has afflicted even the Mass itself, so that a sort of "angelism" has infected our participation: only the consecration counts, the Real Presence and the "Meeting" of Holy Communion; the rest is in this method a negligible addition, man-made and not even instrumental any longer. Like pure spirits in the presence of the Infinite, to speak according to our weak analogical powers, such an attitude essays to seize God without intermediary.

## Signs and Symbols for Spiritual Health

It is also possible to see why the kind of dogmatic theology which is inspired by the controversies of the past few hundred years is not helpful in establishing a sounder relationship between the subject, the sign of the sacrament and the object of its signification.

To exemplify what we mean let us examine the Holy Eucharist. Where our spiritual writers, our everyday and popularized literature and preaching stand, is familiar to all observers. The sacramental signs, the species and symbolism, are boldly ignored and we rush into what is supposed to be the realities, minus the species. What was meant to be a *foreshadowing* of the heavenly banquet, a communal feasting of the redeemed, becomes an *anticipation* of heaven almost without the brethren. One thought can show us, what has happened: what would we do, if tomorrow the Vicar of Christ decreed that: instead of the thin wafer, a bulky piece of leavened bread were to be used and besides: the Cup of the Sacred Blood were reintroduced for the Communion of all? What would be done to our spirituality, if together with this the words of the Consecration had to be chanted again in a tongue that all understood? If we took up again the solemn breaking of the Bread for Communion, the reception of our consecrated morsel on "the throne of our hand" and if all of us sang Psalms while receiving the Sacred Food? I am neither advocating such a return to archaic and long forgotten forms, nor am I predicting that the Holy See will ever do even only part of this. In this context it is only used to illustrate how far we have gone in disembodiment the liturgy first in adapting the outward things and prior to this in pinpointing *selected* truths and in letting other truths wither away in practice and making them too pale in theory. We should not forget that the martyrs and Fathers had a Mass which was closer in outward appearance to the Supper of the Lord and was called the "Breaking of the Bread." Would it not be risky to maintain that our present condition is all progress and a purification of what Christ instituted? Some theologian may maintain that these changes were wrought to a greater "spiritualizing" of the things which Christ saw fit to give a less sophisticated humanity. Controversy,

pastoral convenience, and an overlapping of individual mysticism into liturgical territory may have been the real causes for the changes. A retrenching and reorientation has to take place, before we can hope to be able to take the *species liturgica* as a means of apprehending grace in its full signification and not as a mere container pouring forth grace. Without outward changes and with full acceptance of the present forms we must yet try to integrate our spiritual lives into the world of signs and symbols of the sacraments, especially the Eucharist, or we will forever be condemned to the state of mind which is bent on wearing the liturgy as a hair shirt instead of its being "eyeglasses" to see better and to correct our spiritual sight. Like all comparisons and parables this one limps and should not be pressed.

We must adjust ourselves to seeing the signs as signifiers, as symbols, adequate symbols, of the signified realities they contain. Their meaning carries over into all its details without lapsing into a purely naturalistic interpretation of the symbols, that would be the pitfall this side of the species, while the other, excessive spiritualization, has been mentioned above. We need not be conscious of the problem at all times, because it would rob us of the simplicity which is required of unreflected and genuine life. Let the Incarnation be our guide to the sacraments and we are on safe ground. St. Leo the Great gave us the clear statement that "what was visible in Christ, is now gone into the sacraments." Therefore the liturgical attitude is the one that assumes the posture of one who sees and hears Christ, when the liturgy is concerned.

### Conceptual Wealth of Baptism and Confirmation Rites

From these remarks it is obvious that it is through our incorporation in Christ's Body, the Church, that we share Divine nature, more precisely through created grace effected by the Holy Spirit. For reasons of convenience the normal rite of incorporation is baptism by infusion. Yet, the *Rituale Romanum* still assumes as first choice that of immersion. Concerning ourselves with cause and effect and essential requirements impression is all we need. But from the viewpoint of full signification the immersion rite yields more results, as it goes beyond the mere ablution and

brings out the two biblical aspects of rebirth out of the maternal womb of the Church (so amply referred to in the benediction of the font) and of burial and resurrection. The ritual conformation of the member to the Head has a reality all its own which is sacramental and must go beyond mere intentional signification or illustration. The full liturgy of Baptism is steeped in the Death-Redemption of Christ according to the teaching of St. Paul and the promise of our Lord to Nicodemus.

Nor are the words of the consecration of the Sacred Chrism mere poetic flourishes. We need not accept Denys the Areopagite's doctrine which sees a real presence of the Holy Spirit in Chrism after its consecration, but there still remain the earnest statements that this sacred oil, when applied to a baptized Christian confirms and enlarges the indelible character by giving the *Miles Christi* four potentialities: of priesthood, of martyrdom, of kingship, and prophetdom, perfecting the baptismal character into adult and mature membership in Christ. Baptism is sonship of God, Confirmation assimilates us *in potentia* to the maturity of Christ and responsibility for His Mystical Body. Our task is from then on the actualizing of these seminal "components" of our baptismal character which ordains us to a certain degree into the sharing of Christ's redemptive and sacerdotal role. We have the grace, we then must raise our nature to an adequation of these gifts which are not only the four components, but also the seven gifts enumerated in the rite of "perfecting and confirming Baptism" by its complementary sacrament.

The liturgy of these two sacraments unfolds fuller riches than the average Christian suspects: Baptism in its bare aspect as a washing of sins and a clothing with the unspotted garment of sanctifying grace (which is about the amount of concepts available to the average catechism-trained layman) lacks what might be called the *organic* character of the full sacrament with all its implications and overtones. So is also Confirmation boldly summarized by the words: "we become soldiers in Christ's army." This, truly is not as full and organic in content as it will be if we see it in its liturgical plenitude when the whole rite of both the consecration of chrism and confirmation is contemplated. Human concepts, even the most theological ones are analogical and insufficient to

grasp the reality for which we grope in man's language and in his systematic efforts with the help of tools forged by philosophy. It should by now be clear that the liturgy applied to the two basic sacraments yields a wealth of vital and almost "umbilical" cords which carry floods of supernatural "sap" to the very gates of our souls, which can be unlocked by the key of intelligent grasp of the liturgy by the subject. All this is contained in the reality of the sacramental world. The conceptual wealth, clothed in images, is only an analogy of the reality apprehended by faith "that seeks understanding."

### *Eucharistic Principles of Growth*

When we come to a discussion of the Eucharist the stream of concepts and the volume of overtone swells to even greater volume. Not only must we reflect on the signs of bread and wine and sacred words, more than the "cause-effect" posture of lesser and minor scholastic epigones, but we have this principle of growth by Christ embedded in a great many auxiliary devices.

First there is more than the bare Consecration and Communion: we have the whole Mass, making the presence of Christ particularized and individualized. One of the greatest and most consequential events in liturgical history was the linking together of the synagogal service, the foremass (with its satellites scattered in the space of the Eucharist proper Offertory, Secret, Preface, Communion antiphon-and-psalm, and Postcommunion) and the sacrificial banquet, the fusing of the Word and of the verbal Presence of Christ with the sacramental Presence into one liturgical unit. This has engendered participations of the most fertile and vital kind. The intentional and immediate Presence in the Gospel, then through a medium in the Epistle, in the responsories, antiphons, Psalms, and hymns, make the Consecration and Communion assume a definite hue gently imprinting an image of great reality on the celebrating Church and her members. In technical language of the theologians the words of Scripture are sacramentals. In the liturgy they must be seen as part and parcel of the Holy Eucharist through which the celebrating Church — and it is important to remember that the individual participates as at a banquet, as a member of the

Church — *realizes herself* as the Christ in a *particular* realization spotlighted out of the whole "work of Redemption" for this very occasion.

Second: what is thus particularized and made palatable in selective and sectional slices is assembled to a totality by the temporal cycles of the year. The principle of motion is here not a historical repriming, an abridged sort of life of Christ in Sunday lessons or of dramatized biblical history. It is the projection of the life of the Church, a yearly cycle of her pilgrimage and growth through time into eternity. Starting with Septuagesima Sunday (this is more logical) the liturgical year opens with the spring rites: we prepare for the new Life through Resurrection. The access to it is arduous and requires that we go through mortification, passion, and death: here again Christ is present every day in the twofold manner of the Mass. From Pasch to fall, Christ reaches us in liturgy in the feast and Sunday Masses and consolidates the annual rebirth of the paschal Night in the liturgy of the time. From the fall Ember Days and the eighteenth Sunday after Pentecost until Candlemas and the last Sunday after the Epiphany, gradually gaining intensity of thought and mood, the Parousia-Advent, the *Teleiosis*, is the goal. The spiritual gaze is toward eternity and future: In well-measured intervals, with time given for all the Presences (*Parousiai*) to be better assimilated into the spiritual progress we travel through these cycles annually, deeper rooted in Christ as our eternal contemporary: sacramentally and liturgically we are contemporary with the Master and Lord and His "*Opus Redemptionis*."

Third: the liturgy has its "feeders" funneling the Mass-presence over the whole day in the day hours of the Office. Like sound waves of the Mass echoing through day and night these services spring to the sections of the day: night, sunrise, working, mid-morning, noon, midafternoon, sunset and retiring hour, the Christ of the Mass, a facet of the whole Christ as we live Him during the year's cycles. These cycles are again moved forward by our own life cycles and those of the Church in her history. The liturgy is therefore in a spiritual way to be compared with the atomic universe from the nucleus of the atom circled by its satellites to the rotating worlds of the immense galaxies.

### The Growing Christ

This is not to be understood as a guide for chosen individuals for their lonely journey through life, because the sacramental life of the Church not only involves an official minister of the sacraments and visible signs, but the foremost visible sign is the Church, which means the baptized brethren assembled. This does not mean that liturgical piety is not immensely personal. Our rites are so protective of the dignity of the individual and so chaste in emotion and gesture that the degrees of intimate union are hidden from the prying eye of the *mysts* of the great mystery of the Church. The balance between the alert and the dull, the morally weak and the strong, the earthly minded and the spiritually sensitive, the simple and the sophisticated is marvelously established by the liturgy in which all can be at home and find Jesus Christ and through Him the Father. That the liturgy is the ordinary way does not mean that it is geared to lowest common denominator and addresses itself to the senses only, leaving the mystic to dig himself his own cisterns in greater depth. It is a liturgical text that speaks of the *Sobria Ebrietas*: "*Laeti bibamus sobriam ebrietatem Spiritus*: let us drink with joy the sober drunkenness of the Spirit."

All these essays are tentative only, a groping for an answer to the problem stated hereabove. The more man seeks light in his faith, the more he realizes that God remains Mystery and the Unknown. Father Victor White, O.P., in his great book *God the Unknown* quotes the prince of the Scholastics, St. Thomas Aquinas: "we are most perfectly at one with Him when we know that He is utterly unknown," or as he states himself: "We are most in His light when we are most in the dark about Him" (p. 23). *Multifarie multisque modis* has God spoken to us, till at last He spoke His Word made *flesh*. What was visible in Christ is now in His sacraments. As long as we live in this flesh, He is our sole Mediator through whom we apprehend the Mystery of Mysteries.

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# Spiritual Growth=Steps of Love

## THE DARK NIGHTS OF LOVE

*Father Jordon Aumann, O.P.*

THE essence of Christian perfection and sanctity is the charity which unites God and the soul in the bond of divine love, and the greater the charity, the greater the perfection. In glory, where the soul will be perfect in charity, the union between God and the soul will have the ineffable intimacy of the immediate and facial vision of God, seen in the light of glory. On earth however, the soul normally progresses in charity by degrees, and in the most intimate union of which it is capable, it will enjoy an affective and experimental union with the Trinity which dwells in the souls of the just.

The spiritual journey of the soul to the summit of Christian perfection constitutes the subject matter of spiritual theology, that part of theology which studies the nature of Christian perfection and the means to attain it. Since the time when Christ Himself first enunciated the formula for Christian perfection—that of loving God with all one's heart and soul and strength—theologians have vied with one another in a holy rivalry to expound the hidden mysteries and beauties of the love of God. Some have turned to the Scriptures for their inspiration, others to the Fathers of the Church and theological tradition, and still others have read the tablet of their own heart, on which the Holy Ghost had written in a mystical manner the secrets of intimate union and transformation in God. All, however, were impelled by that same apostolic urge to encourage other souls to "taste and see that the Lord is sweet."

While speculative theologians have treated of the truths of the

spiritual life in terminology that is technical and abstract, the mystics have resorted to expressions that are metaphorical, descriptive, and affective. Often the language of the mystics has been more Scriptural, while that of the speculative theologians has been somewhat philosophical. This does not mean, of course, that there is any doctrinal opposition between the mystics and the speculative theologians, for as a rule the difference is no greater than that between the language of the poet and the philosopher.

### *The Joannine Approach*

St. John of the Cross is one of the relatively few writers in whom we find a marvelous blending of the theologian and the mystic, and as a result, he has written more beautifully and has described more clearly than most writers the hidden beauties of the spiritual life. At times he almost surpasses St. Teresa of Avila in penetrating psychological insight and the formulation of rules of behavior which echo the forceful vigor of the Mother of Carmel. At other times he soars like an eagle into the very face of the sun, so that his readers are left standing below with upturned faces, peering intently to follow his mystical flight.

But for all his clarity and poetic beauty, St. John of the Cross has never been among the most widely read of the mystical writers. Rather, many have considered his doctrine excessively severe and even forbidding. Yet the Saint himself would hardly be surprised at this evaluation of his writings, since he admitted that he was writing for "certain persons of our Sacred Order of Mount Carmel of the primitive observance, both friars and nuns . . . to whom God is granting the favor of placing them on the road to this Mount."<sup>1</sup> In other words, St. John of the Cross was not addressing himself to all Christians in general, but to those who were already detached from the temporal things of the world and were approaching the mystical state. This does not mean that the doctrine of St. John of the Cross cannot benefit all Christian souls who are desirous of striving for greater perfection; but it does mean that for many souls the teaching of St. John of the Cross will seem too difficult or even frightening. Not that it is so in

<sup>1</sup> *Ascent*, Prologue.

reality, but that these souls, for one reason or another, are not yet ready for such austere spiritual fare or the severe trials that it entails. On the other hand, it would be a great blessing if all Christians in our day and in our land could be brought to an understanding of the basic doctrine of St. John of the Cross, if only to recapture an appreciation for suffering and the cross and to learn of the separating effect of love.

While all theologians must admit that charity or the love of God is the very essence of Christian perfection and that by its very nature charity tends to increase to full flowering in the mystical state, not all theologians have written of the spiritual life from the same point of view. Growth in charity may be studied from either a negative or a positive aspect. The positive aspect is that of the cultivation of virtue, the increase of grace and charity by meritorious actions and the use of the sacraments; progress in the various grades of prayer; the negative aspect is that of self-abnegation, mortification, custody of the senses, withdrawal from self, and death to self-love. The negative and the positive aspects are but the two sides of the same coin and while it is orthodox to study Christian perfection from either one, it is imperative to avoid undue emphasis on any particular point.

In view of his vocation as a Carmelite of strict observance, the terrible persecutions which he suffered personally, and the natural bent of his spirit for suffering and detachment,<sup>2</sup> it is logical that St. John of the Cross would treat of love and the spiritual life from the negative aspect of suffering, withdrawal, and the void. Indeed, it is not possible to grasp his doctrine on love without understanding his teaching on the separating effect of love. As a contemplative, it is likewise natural that for him the predominant manifestation of the love of God should be the passage through the various grades of prayer to the transforming union of the mystical marriage.<sup>3</sup> Because of his approach to the theology of

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<sup>2</sup> Referring to a similar miracle in the lives of St. John of the Cross and St. Thomas Aquinas, Father L. J. Bondy, C.S.B., writes: "To both Thomas and John it was given to hear from the lips of the crucified Saviour the question: 'What reward do you ask?' St. Thomas answers: 'Nothing but Thyself, O Lord.' St. John asks as his reward: 'To suffer and to be despised for You.' The result is really the same. Thomas stresses the ontological content of the reward; John the surest and quickest means for reaching it" (*The Doctrine of the Void*, Leonard A. McCann, C.S.B., Introduction, p. 12).

Christian perfection, St. John of the Cross has been called the Doctor of the Void or, as the Spanish sometimes like to refer to him, the Doctor of *Nada* (Nothingness).

### *Enkindling of Love*

St. John of the Cross had been sufficiently trained in theology at Salamanca to know that love is by definition an inclination or tendency of the lover to the beloved. He likewise realized that the very movement of the lover to the embrace of the beloved implies a withdrawal from self and from all things distinct from the beloved. If the lover gives himself to the beloved, he must of necessity remove or detach himself from that which is not the beloved. Indeed, in the perfect act of love, the lover gives himself completely in the surrender of love. To do this, he must empty himself of self, for the love of self is a movement contrary to the complete surrender of self to another. Nevertheless, the lover does not impoverish himself or annihilate himself in this process; rather, he is in turn filled and enriched by the possession of the beloved. In giving himself, he finds himself, not in himself, but in the beloved. Thus, perfect friendship is a mutual giving of self, a mutual surrender, a mutual death to self, and a mutual resurrection to live again in the one who is loved.

When it is a question of the love of a soul for God and of God for the soul, the first movement or invitation to love comes from God, for the first grace is a gratuitous gift from God. God is a divine magnet which sends forth its powerful rays of love to draw the soul to itself. Unfortunately, the soul of the Christian is encrusted with the effects of original sin, so that the power of the divine rays is often nullified or weakened. Moreover, some souls have resolutely turned away from God in their self-seeking or their attachment to created things. A powerful grace and a sincere conversion are necessary before such souls can begin to move, ever so slowly at first, toward the magnet of divine love. But as they

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<sup>3</sup> "Carmelite life is especially directed toward contemplation. The soul seeks to meet God in solitude and silence. There it strives to detach itself from created things, to purify its faculties from everything that hinders its union with God, and to occupy itself with Him alone. . . . Prayer is his principal occupation" (*The Spirit and Prayer of Carmel*, François Jamart, O.C.D., p. 75).

approach the magnet more closely, their progress becomes more rapid, since the drawing power of the magnet is stronger as the distance is shortened.

Nevertheless, even in this stage — which moderns would call the illuminative way and the ancients called the stage of proficients or progressives — the soul's progress to the transforming union can still be retarded considerably by imperfections and inclinations to affection for created things, whether material or spiritual. Consequently, the purgation of the senses and of the spirit is not yet completed; and since the soul at this point is still in the ascetical way, although approaching the mystical, it must rely on the ordinary ascetical means of active purgation.

### Self-Surrender

For a soul to attain the state of perfection, it has ordinarily to pass first through two principal kinds of night, which spiritual persons call purgations or purifications.<sup>4</sup> . . . (The soul sets forth, enkindled by the love of God, on a dark night) which is the privation and purgation of all its sensual desires . . . and also with respect to the desire of its will.<sup>5</sup> . . . The reason why it is necessary for the soul to pass through this dark night of mortification of the desires and denial of pleasure in all things in order to attain divine union with God is because all the affections which it has for creatures are pure darkness in the eyes of God, and when the the soul is clothed in these affections, it has no capacity for being enlightened and possessed by the pure and simple light of God.<sup>6</sup> . . . The affection and attachment which the soul has for creatures makes the soul like these creatures, and the greater its affection, the greater the equality and likeness between them, for love causes a likeness between the lover and the thing loved. . . . Thus, he that loves a creature becomes as lowly as that creature, and in some ways lower, for love not only makes the lover equal to the object of his love, but even subjects him to it. Hence it is that the soul that loves anything other than God becomes incapable of pure union with God and transformation in Him. . . . The soul that sets

<sup>4</sup> *Ascent*, Bk. I, chap. 1, n. 1.

<sup>5</sup> *Ibid.*, Bk. I, chap. 1, n. 4.

<sup>6</sup> *Ibid.*, Bk. I, chap. 4, n. 1.

its affection on creatures will be unable to comprehend God and until it is purged, it will neither be able to possess Him here below through the transformation of love nor in glory in pure vision.<sup>7</sup>

### *The Divine Prey*

The effects of original sin and the traces of personal sins are so deeply rooted in man that even when the individual has purged himself as well as he can, there yet remains something to be purified in the soul, and this can be done effectively only by the hand of God Himself. Hence, even when the will has been purged by charity, which causes emptiness in the will and detachment from all affection and delight that is not God,<sup>8</sup> a passive purgation yet remains to be suffered by the soul. The reason for the insufficiency of the active purgation lies in the fact that as long as the soul is the principal agent in this activity, its actions are human and not divine. The activity of the ascetical state is the activity of the infused virtues, and these operate in a human manner; but complete purgation requires the activity of the gifts of the Holy Ghost, which are divine in substance and in their manner of operation.

But neither from these imperfections nor from those others can the soul be perfectly purified until God brings it into the passive purgation of that dark night of which we shall speak presently.<sup>9</sup> . . . This night . . . produces in spiritual persons two kinds of darkness or purgation, corresponding to the two parts of man's nature, namely, the sensual and the spiritual.<sup>10</sup> . . . Since these faculties have neither purity nor strength nor capacity to receive and taste things that are supernatural after the manner of those things, which manner is divine, but can do so only after their own manner, which is human and base . . . it is meet that its faculties be in darkness concerning these divine things. . . . Being weaned and purged and annihilated in this respect first of all, they may

<sup>7</sup> *Ibid.*, Bk. I, chap. 4, n. 5.

<sup>8</sup> *Ascent*, Bk. II, chap. 6, n. 2. "Charity causes emptiness in the will with respect to all things, since it obliges us to love God above them all, which cannot be unless we withdraw our affection from them all in order to set it wholly upon God" (*ibid.*, Bk. II, chap. 5, n. 4).

<sup>9</sup> *Dark Night*, Bk. I, chap. 3, n. 3; chap. 7, n. 5.

<sup>10</sup> *Ibid.*, Bk. I, chap. 8, n. 1.

lose that base and human way of receiving and acting, and thus all these faculties and desires of the soul may be prepared and tempered in such a way as to be able to receive, feel, and taste that which is divine and supernatural in a sublime and lofty manner, which is impossible if the old man die not first of all.<sup>11</sup>

### *The Night: Love's Encounter*

All the various purgations of the soul described so eloquently by St. John of the Cross are orientated to the one sublime goal: the transforming union of love. Therefore, however terrible the pain that is suffered and however dark the night, the soul can always live and suffer in the hope of seeing the dawn of that new day when the brightness of the divine sun will flood the purified soul with mystical splendor. And to encourage the soul in the midst of its purgations and purifications, St. John of the Cross enumerates the ten steps or degrees of divine love, according to the doctrine of St. Bernard and St. Thomas Aquinas:

The first step causes the soul to languish, with profit to itself. . . . This sickness is not unto death, but for the glory of God, for in this sickness the soul swoons as to sin and to all things that are not of God. . . . As the sick man loses his appetite and taste for food . . . so likewise in this degree of love the soul loses its taste and desire for all things. . . . The second step causes the soul to seek God without ceasing. The soul now walks with such great care that it seeks the Beloved in all things. In whatever it thinks, it thinks at once of the Beloved; of whatever it speaks, in whatever matters present themselves to it, it speaks and communes with the Beloved. . . . All its care is about the Beloved. . . . The third step of the ladder of love is that which causes the soul to work and gives it fervor so that it does not fail. The soul considers great works undertaken for the Beloved as small; many things as few; and the long time which it serves Him as short. . . . Because of its great love for God, the soul suffers great pains and afflictions because of the little that it does for God, and if it were lawful for it to be destroyed a thousand times for Him, it would be comforted. . . . Another marvelous effect produced in the soul is that

<sup>11</sup> *Ibid.*, Bk. II, chap. 16, n. 4.

it considers itself as being most certainly worse than all other souls, first, because love is constantly teaching it how much is due to God, and second, because as the works it performs for God are many and it knows them all to be faulty and imperfect, they all cause it confusion and affliction, for the soul realizes in how lowly a manner it is working for God. . . . The fourth step is that by which is caused in the soul a habitual suffering because of the Beloved, yet without weariness. As St. Augustine says, love makes all things that are great, grievous, and burdensome to be almost nothing. . . . The spirit now has so much strength that it has subjected the flesh and takes as little account of it as a tree does of its leaves. In no way does the soul seek its own consolation or pleasure, either in God or in anything else, nor does it desire to seek or pray to God for favors. . . . All its care is to be able to do something that is pleasing to God and to render Him some service such as He merits and in return for what it has received from Him. . . . The fifth step makes the soul desire and long for God impatiently. On this step the vehemence of the lover to comprehend the Beloved and be united with Him is such that every delay, however brief, becomes very long, wearisome, and oppressive to it. . . . On the sixth step the soul runs swiftly to God and touches Him again and again. It runs without fainting by reason of its hope. For here the love that has made it strong makes it fly swiftly. . . . The seventh step makes the soul vehement in its boldness. Here love does not employ its judgment in order to hope and it does not take counsel so that it may draw back, nor can any shame restrain it. . . . The eighth step causes the soul to seize Him and hold Him fast, without letting Him go. . . . On this step the soul satisfies its desire, but not continuously. Certain souls climb some way and lose their hold, for if this state were to continue, it would be the possession of glory in this life. . . . The ninth step makes the soul burn with sweetness. This step is that of the perfect . . . for this sweet and delectable ardor is caused in them by the Holy Ghost, by reason of their union with God. . . . The tenth and last step causes the soul to be wholly assimilated to God by reason of the clear and immediate vision of God which the soul now possesses and the soul goes forth from the flesh.<sup>12</sup>

<sup>12</sup> *Dark Night*, Bk. II, chaps. 19, 20.

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# Spiritual Growth Through Social Action

*Donald J. Thorman*

THE problem of spirituality and spiritual growth is as old as man. It has been the subject of most of mankind's literature and for the religious man, at least, history itself is but a reflection of the eternal rise and fall of spirituality in the souls of men. What, then, can be said about spiritual formation and growth that hasn't already been said better before in a hundred different ways and as many languages? Probably nothing new. But . . . Despite the awe-inspiring spiritual heritage of the Christian, the spiritual life is a new adventure, a unique experience for each new generation. Times change. So do societies and cultures. And so the old principles have to be polished off and applied anew to different situations.

In our own generation, the stress is on the layman and the social aspects of spirituality. In a highly complex, centralized and interdependent type of society social institutions sometimes take on a deadly and almost overwhelming importance and wield such an influence that man's spiritual life is profoundly influenced.

As a reaction to the evil found in so many of society's institutions, and aided and abetted by the spirit of individualism which has become so much a part of our culture, many spiritually oriented persons withdraw from society. Repelled by the evil they see everywhere, they seek to avoid contact with it. This is no personal criticism of such persons — of whom observation indicates there are more than a few. Indeed, many of them become daily communicants and devote themselves to prayer and penance. Who is to judge them but the Divine Judge Himself?

But it is the thesis of this article that a more mature and socially efficacious spiritual growth can take place in the average layman by *not* withdrawing from society. That closer union with Christ may be advanced in and through the very society which repels so many. That instead of withdrawing we must throw ourselves into the fray. It is possible for the layman to go through the world to God. Perhaps "possible" is too weak a word to use. A case might well be made that since the layman is in and of the world, he *must*, in one way or another, proceed to God through the world. In the world we see spiritual and physical evils which, because of our love for God, can become for us royal steppingstones to sanctity as we practice the spiritual and corporal works of mercy or some other kind of action to alleviate these evils and attempt to make the spirit of Christ reign in ourselves, in others, and in the very warp and woof of society itself. Abbé Pierre must have this in mind as he continually preaches that through social action a person gets an awareness of God. It is possible, he implies, to touch God through feeding the hungry or working for social justice and social charity, just as we touch Him through contemplation.

Of course, the cycle is not complete, nor will our sanctity be complete, unless we return to contemplation. But the important point is that we must not neglect or underestimate the potential of spiritual growth open to us through action.

A word might be said here about the meaning of the terms action and social action. Both of them, as used here, refer primarily to external acts. That is, primarily actions which are aimed outside the individual — toward other individuals, groups, or even the social environment. The term social action is more appropriate when applied to action aimed at solving the "social question" which has occupied the minds of recent popes in their social encyclicals: i.e., social and economic life. It is not our purpose to attempt to define the words, so much as it is to distinguish them from interior action, such as individual meditation, saying the rosary, spiritual reading, etc.

### *Formative Power of Action*

Canon Cardijn gave a vivid example of the formative power of action in an article ("Forming an Elite," *New Life*, London, Sep-

tember–October, 1955) in an English publication when he wrote:

We must have faith in the worth of action to form and to transform.

I have seen young fellows steeped in vice, the poor lads pretty well morbidly sexual. I have saved them all, everyone without exception by action. I would ask them to do this or that. After a time they would come along and tell me "I don't seem to get time for that sort of thing now." When they came back from the dance hall, their minds quite obsessed by their flirting with the girls there, I would give them a job to do. I would not stop to point out why they could not let themselves go on as they had been doing. I would bide my time, waiting for the psychological moment; straightway I gave them a job to do. There you have the formative power of action. Not words but acts! Simple acts, not a continuous stream of acts, just one here and there — "Would you take this letter for me?" Would you have a word with a certain worker? Would you say hello when you pass him in the street? —

Social psychology affirms this approach in many interesting ways. Psychologists studying man's behavior in society have found that by setting up patterns of behavior it is possible to have an effect on the attitudes of the individuals following out these patterns.

A prejudiced person, for example, might well have his prejudices reduced considerably by being put into a situation in which he has to deal on an equal basis with members of minority groups. By being compelled to treat minorities as equals there is an almost inevitable subtle effect which is capable of gradually reforming a prejudiced individual's attitudes to the point where he begins to think of minorities as equals. Granting favorable circumstances, this is precisely what has happened to many men who have been forced to serve in the integrated armed forces.

Of course, it would be difficult to defend the thesis that a deep, living, interior spiritual growth flows unaided and *ex opere operato* from the performance of good acts alone. And I don't think that Canon Cardijn would hold that position. Yet, there is something to be said for the theory that an act can be the father of the thought. As Abbé Pierre indicates, the act can lead you back to God, although it does not necessarily have to do so.

Let's pursue this line of thought further, using two examples which set up a kind of paradox. A group of priests in a midwestern archdiocese has been exploring for some time the relation between social action and purity. It is their tentative conclusion that high school students who become involved in social movements, such as the Young Christian Students, are less likely to fall prey to impurity.

There is more involved here than merely keeping young people busy so that they don't have time for sin. The principle is that the entire emphasis and orientation of the Catholic social movements is directed outside the individual. Impurity is often found in persons who are inner-directed, who are selfish and concerned primarily with themselves. But the orientation of persons in the social movements is to be concerned for others and for the social and spiritual environment in which others live and work. By becoming involved in social action they forget self — with its connotation of impurity — and become concerned with others. For them, social action has spiritual values over and above the value of the action itself.

But this is not necessarily true for everyone engaged in such action. The director of adult education in a large archdiocese told this writer recently that he is continually perplexed by his experience that the graduates of secular universities are often more socially conscious than are the graduates of Catholic universities. This is reflected in the seemingly larger numbers of non-Catholics than Catholics engaged in community projects reflecting an interest in the field of social action: human relations work, social service centers, housing groups, etc. And yet not infrequently people engaged in such "religious" work profess no religion and they see no conflict between such activity and a man's personal morality. The protagonist of *Gentleman's Agreement*, for instance, is admired for his desire to eliminate anti-Semitism and the fact that his personal moral standards might approximate those of a tomcat does not distract from that admiration.

### *Action Aids Contemplation*

It seems a paradox to argue that social action is an excellent means of spiritual growth when, for many, conceivably most, of the people engaged in it spirituality is an alien subject. The resolution of the problem seems to lie with the individual rather than the action. True interior spiritual growth through social action can take place only in the spiritually oriented individual. But for such an individual it can become a path to sanctity.

What those who deprecate social action as a means of spiritual growth often forget is the nature of social action. They do not

see that, upon analysis, social action is often really only the spiritual and corporal works of mercy extended into the facts of life in the twentieth century. Working for minimum wage legislation is certainly one way of helping to feed the hungry and clothe the naked. Striving for better housing is not unrelated to sheltering the homeless. And Catholic interracial, labor, and adult education groups are doing their share to instruct the ignorant.

An additional consideration concerns the modern Catholic Action movements which are constructed around the concept of spiritual growth through social action. YCS, YCW, the Christian Family Movement, for example. All of them stress the importance of the social actions resulting from their social inquiries. The very structure of their meetings — with only 15 minutes each set aside for the Gospel and the liturgy discussions, but 45 minutes devoted to the social inquiry — reflect this orientation. Leaders of these movements are careful to point out that there is no dichotomy between the action taken as a result of the gospel discussion and that flowing from the social inquiry. One is not spiritual and the other secular. On the contrary, both of them are regarded as “spiritual” in the sense that in the social inquiry an attempt is made to extend the spirit of the Gospels into some social situation, to Christianize a segment of social life.

For members of these apostolic groups, action is an expression of interior sentiments. But it is equally important to note that these exterior actions can and do help to bolster and reinforce the interior life of the individuals performing them. The repeated performance of good acts sets up a situation — an occasion of virtue, it might be called — in which the spiritual life might flourish all the more easily.

### *Action Without Contemplation Is Blind*

However, there are certain perils inherent in the concept of spiritual growth through social action that must not be overlooked. And the greatest danger, perhaps, is that the interior life might be sacrificed for the sake of devoting oneself to external actions. Being activists by nature, this is a fallacy into which Americans may easily fall. The only antidote is for us to grasp that the measure of growth is in the individual soul and not in the type and extent

of the actions performed. Within our frame of reference, a multiplication of successful actions means nothing unless it is accompanied by a concomitant deepened and enriched spirituality in the soul of the individual performing the actions.

In the recent *Catholic Church, U.S.A.* (Fides), Father Jordon Aumann, O.P., makes this point when he writes that "it is not what we do that makes us holy, but the charity that motivates us." Commenting on activism, he observes that "the ideal to be proposed is that the apostolate and all good works should proceed from a profound interior life. And while it is true that a spiritual formation is possible through action, the external good works receive their value and merit from the charity that impels them and are themselves dispositions to contemplation and the exercises of the interior life. It is only in this restricted sense that we can subscribe to the doctrine of a spirituality of action. But to make the external works or even the apostolate an end in themselves is to fall victim to what Pope Pius XII has called 'the heresy of action.'"

However, the coin has two sides. It is too easy to delay participation in essential social action on the grounds that we have not yet completed our forty days in the desert, that we need more preparation before undertaking the active life. There is always the danger that we may falsely identify our interior life as "spiritual" and the exterior life as "secular," when, in actuality, our exterior life must be an extension of our inner spirituality into the world. We must never lose sight of the fact that our social actions can also be spiritual actions which will contribute to our spiritual formation, to the strengthening of our interior spirituality.

The fount of life for the priest, religious, or layman engaged in social action is to be found in contemplation and the liturgy, but because these essential acts are vivifying they impel the social actionist to further action and greater efforts. And authentic Christian social action in itself works subtly and often imperceptibly to lead the social actionist closer to the Source of his action. Interior life and social action thus blend into one continuous act of love and self-giving which reflect an intimate sharing of divine life. That is the real meaning of spiritual growth through social action.

O Jesus, enable me, by  
means of all things that  
are, to grow in Thee who  
art the Head of the Body  
whereof I am called to  
be a member.

Make me live in Thee,  
by Thee, and with Thee.

Amen.

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# Childhood and Maturity

## ST. THÉRÈSE OF THE CHILD JESUS

*Father Lucien-Marie de St. Joseph, O.C.D..*

CONSIDER the warning which His Holiness Pius XI expressed in these words: "Say, and have it given out, that the spirituality of the little Saint has been made a bit too insipid. How masculine she is, and how virile, nevertheless! St. Thérèse of the Child Jesus is a 'great man' whose whole doctrine preaches renunciation." Pius XII echoes him: "Genuine spiritual childhood is distinguished from the other variety by its maturity of judgment, supernaturally inspired by the Master, 'Brethren, do not become children in sense,' says St. Paul, 'But in malice be children'" (1 Cor. 14:20).<sup>1</sup>

It would seem that ever since the Beatification, Rev. Mother Agnes of Jesus had had a presentiment of the dangers of a wrong interpretation of her saintly Sister's doctrine:

"Instructed and fortified by these divine teachings, how could one believe that Sister Thérèse of the Child Jesus had a silly and childish kind of piety, as people have sometimes said? She did not mean the term 'child' in the strict sense of the word."

And a little further on: "When in her spiritual life she uses certain terms to define what this childhood is, it is only by way of comparison, and to better express her thought."

The little Saint herself ever since her first experiences had feared a wrong interpretation of her thought. One of her novices, rightly enthusiastic over the teaching of her mistress,<sup>2</sup> wanted also

<sup>1</sup> From an autograph letter to the Bishop of Lisieux, Aug. 7, 1947.

<sup>2</sup> Although never having had the title, she really exercised the functions of novice mistress, after 1893.

to pass on to a member of her family the message of the Little Way of Spiritual Childhood. The Saint dissuaded her, fearing that a few too brief words might alter the purity of her doctrine.

The catch in the facile image of *childhood* is that one may become misled by this facility, and that one may neglect the profundity of thought which is too readily interpreted. The great mass of all kinds of works about St. Thérèse of Lisieux is no doubt a revelation of the difficulty we are in, in fencing in with ready-made words, the flexible intuition which transformed the life of a twenty-year-old Carmelite. We can readily imagine her, faced with this kind of literature, spiritual and secular, exclaiming in exasperation, as she did one day at the inaccurate expression of one of her Sisters: "Oh! it isn't that!". . .<sup>3</sup>

When Sister Mary of the Sacred Heart asked her, "Then you are a baby?" she assumed an expression *full of solemnity* (and it is well to underline this expression, which was not at all unusual in the face of the little Saint) and replied: "Yes, but a baby who thinks long thoughts! A baby who is very old."<sup>4</sup>

And the Godmother of the Saint adds these reflections written down in the process of beatification: "I had never understood better than at that moment, how much virility her Way of Childhood involved, and I thought it very fitting that in her manuscript she had quoted the words of David, 'I am young and nevertheless I am become wiser than my elders.'"<sup>5</sup>

It could not be stated more clearly that spiritual childhood co-existed in St. Thérèse together with a real maturity of soul. This is a statement that needs to be examined thoroughly, under the light of spiritual theology.<sup>6</sup>

Only faith, in the light of which all things are judged in theology, can guide us in the interpretation of the facts furnished by history, in the psychological explanation of the essentially supernatural attitudes of soul of the little Saint, and in regard to their connection with the principles of theology. Only faith will enable the spiritual theologian to make a synthesis of the elements furnished by historical knowledge, psychology, and moral theology, but it

<sup>3</sup> Cf. Msgr. Paulot, *The Doctrinal Message*, p. 32.

<sup>4</sup> *Novissima Verba*, p. 112.

<sup>5</sup> Apostolic Process, p. 770.

<sup>6</sup> *Thomist Review*, 1950, pp. 268-289.

will not supply the deficiency for a lack in any one of these three elements.

### I. Spiritual Childhood Is Not Infantilism

Paradoxical as it may seem, we must first state what St. Thérèse of the Child Jesus meant by "spiritual childhood." What must be obvious to all is that she certainly did not mean to confound spiritual childhood with infantilism — that is to say, with the psychological state characterized by a turning backward, or regression, which causes an adult to speak, think, feel, and act like a child. Let us leave for the moment the problem of the Teresian vocabulary, which we shall try to solve later on. St. Paul refers to a past time when he thought and felt as a child (1 Cor. 13:11). However touching childhood may be because of its budding bloom, we must not forget that its lack of development calls for a maturity. In this sense, childhood does not represent a value after which we ought to aspire. St. Paul's reproaches to the Corinthians are clear enough (1 Cor. 3:2 and 14:20). The evaluation of childhood is a relatively new thing in literature, and one would find few examples of it before the romantic era. We must even go further: the affectivity of a child is marked not only by lack of achievement, but it admits of both tyranny, and an egoism which wants to appropriate for itself a loved object rather than to give itself — qualities which have nothing about them which might make them worthy of being recommended as examples. Everything which is incomplete or which is an imperfect way of living is contrary to the Way of Childhood.

We notice signs of this in the fact that very often the Little Saint found it necessary to correct the picture of childhood by qualifications, or by adding to it other figures which manifest her familiarity with puerility as regards the spiritual life. She wrote to one of her Sisters in religion this phrase, in which the internal contradiction is revealing: "A missionary child and warrior — what a marvell!" The need of correction is obvious, and is stated specifically in the reproach written to the same person: "Also he would be very pleased (the Saint here uses the masculine in speaking of herself) to see the little child (so she designates her correspon-

<sup>7</sup> *Letters*, p. 382.

dent) deprive himself of consolations far too childish and unworthy of a missionary or a warrior."<sup>8</sup>

How could one fail to be struck, as Père Petitot was, with the magnanimity of her desires?<sup>9</sup> There is no trace of a belittling of the ideal for her who dreamed of becoming "a great saint," and here the epithet is precious and freighted with meaning. Sr. Genevieve of the Holy Face confided to us orally the information that from the time of her entrance into Carmel St. Thérèse of the Child Jesus was fascinated by Teresa of Avila's ideal of heroic sanctity and that, following her example, she dreamed of becoming a bride; and becoming a bride meant, she knew, the arduous process of maturing. The attitude of spiritual childhood was not in her life a matter of psychological permanence. It was the fruit of conversion. That is the expression she uses to designate the night of Christmas, 1888: "the night of my conversion."<sup>10</sup> And in so doing, the Saint fulfilled the counsel of the Gospel which demands not that we remain children, but that having reached adulthood, we should, like Nicodemus, be converted to become children again. Thérèse experienced what she taught.<sup>11</sup> She did not give up this supernatural ambition, and her great desires never ceased increasing until they reached infinitude. It is a curious thing, and worth noticing, that all her desires are formulated in the masculine, and doubtless we should see in this, in one sense, a manifestation of her desire of achievement and of plenitude: she longed to be a warrior, a priest, an apostle, a doctor, and a martyr.<sup>12</sup> Moreover, this is not a matter of an isolated moment of fervor. From her childhood Thérèse had been captivated with the ideal of greatness. This is no doubt the explanation of her special love for Jeanne d'Arc, the least childlike, and in an almost specific sense, the most virile of saints. Like her, Thérèse felt herself destined for "great things."<sup>13</sup> She felt in her heart the desire and the courage to imitate her. If it is true that a life takes its value from the ideal which it pursues, the life of Thérèse has nothing childish about it: its goal is absolute plenitude and greatness. Spiritual childhood pertains

<sup>8</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 383.      <sup>9</sup> *St. Thérèse of Lisieux*, pp. 208-210.      <sup>10</sup> *Letters*, p. 351.

<sup>11</sup> Even physically she was rather tall and had a certain majesty about her walk which brought down upon her irritated raillery from some of her Sisters in religion.

<sup>12</sup> *Story of a Soul*, Ch. XI.

<sup>13</sup> *Letters*, p. 387.

only to the means. The Saint discovered it as a way to obtain the realization of a desire for sanctity which allowed for no reservations.

### *Humility and the Audacious Confidence of Love*

Essentially, the Little Way (as the Saint herself has said) consists in "A disposition of heart which makes us humble and little in the arms of God, conscious of our weakness and confident to the point of audacity in His Goodness as Father."<sup>14</sup> What strikes one in this statement is the timeless character of this spiritual childhood. It is not just a moment of the spiritual life which must of necessity be left behind, some day. It is a way of living, of acting, in which the realizations are as multiple and as varied as the diverse ages of the spiritual life. It is not at all an artificial recipe, or a superficial devotion. It is rooted at the very foundation as a reality. In the light of the affirmations of faith in the Gospel and in St. Paul, in the light of the deductions of the great theologians, a St. Augustine, a St. Thomas Aquinas, it seems to be simply an awareness of what is; the mystery of the soul under the impulse of the grace of God. Actually, without grace, we could not do anything. It is God alone who gives us power to exist, to love, to act, supernaturally. Whether we like it or not, our spiritual life cannot be an initiative on our part, as regards God: it can only be a placing of ourselves in the hands of Him who is infinitely good, who loves us gratuitously, with a love which is first and which is the creator of its object: "For whosoever are led by the Spirit of God, they are the sons of God" (Rom. 8:14). We could never meditate enough on this passage which is so full of meaning; *are led* — those who are in the hands of God, those whom God leads. The whole theology of grace is contained in that statement, the whole of our attitude under the inspiration of grace, also. The Way of Spiritual Childhood states with transparent clarity this bond of dependence, lived and loved, on God who is a Father and infinitely good. Without Him we can do nothing — who would deny it? And with Him nothing is impossible for us: confidence must be pushed even to the length of audacity. St. Paul has declared that without restriction.

Spiritual childhood is an attitude of soul marked by two com-

<sup>14</sup> *Novissima Verba*, p. 113.

plementary traits: a humility of heart which is conscious of its weakness, and even its complete powerlessness; and an audacious confidence of a being who knows he is loved infinitely. The picture which best sums up this attitude is that of a child in its father's arms. But it is only a picture, and the reality which it represents is perfectly realizable at every age in the spiritual life. "If I were to die at 80, if I had been in many monasteries, and loaded with responsibilities, I should remain, I feel sure, just as little as today."<sup>15</sup>

## II. Maturity Is Autonomy and Fruitfulness

These statements which rest upon theological certitudes and not upon hypotheses are completely satisfying to the theologian but leave a doubt in the mind of the psychologist. All the expressions used in the preceding description are characteristic of passivity: powerlessness, dependence, docility, emptiness, the placing of one's self in the hands of God. All these qualities are appropriate to the psychology of a child. They are understandable also in regard to a woman. But are they not incompatible with an adult spirituality, and above all, with a virile spirituality? The objection has been raised, and we are grateful to the critic, because it has allowed us to examine more deeply the experience of St. Thérèse of the Child Jesus, and to explain her doctrine.

Just as what characterizes childhood is the feeling of dependence in regard to another, so it is autonomy in regard to others which marks maturity. The adult is he who is no longer dependent upon his parents, either in regard to the formation of his judgments or in the regulating of his conduct. At the same time — and the two things go together — his way of loving, which up until this time consisted in an egotistical desire of appropriating for himself the loved object, has become a spontaneous need of giving to the other, and of making him happy. And just to the extent that egotistical love is sterile, to the same extent a love which gives, is fruitful. These two marks: autonomy and fecundity in the gift of self, seem to us to characterize maturity much better than the prudence or the wisdom that people sometimes invoke, reasonably enough, in other connections.

Now it is obvious that St. Thérèse of the Child Jesus possessed

<sup>15</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 185-186.

an astonishing autonomy in the conduct of her personal spiritual life: she herself, and she alone, made her spiritual synthesis, and she explained it in a systematic form she could claim her own. Furthermore, her system of spirituality inspired by a gift of herself which was free from all "narcissism" very quickly (she was scarcely twenty years old) had a real fruitfulness among her novices, and then soon after for her spiritual brothers. What is important to note is not that it might be possible to discover beside traits revealing spiritual childhood, other traits, independent of the first, which manifest a real maturity; but it is the way itself, in which St. Thérèse of the Child Jesus lived and expressed spiritual childhood which is marked with an authentic maturity. From the psychological point of view, it is this simultaneousness, or rather, this adult way of living and showing what spiritual childhood is which guarantees the quality of the traits which we have already noted, and of which the exclusively passive side calls for caution; the living synthesis of spiritual childhood and autonomy, along with fruitfulness, satisfies the just demands of a sane psychology.

### *Spiritual Maturity*

First of all there is a difficulty to be solved. This very problem sheds light on the spiritual maturity of Thérèse of the Child Jesus. At the first glance, we note its importance. It would be too easy to escape it with a word of scorn. Everyone realizes the importance of the vocabulary as a means of profound psychological insight to a person. Now a whole aspect of the Theresian vocabulary and of the imagery used by the Saint is marked, up to the very end of her existence, by a disquieting infantilism. Why not face this criticism squarely?

Let us overlook, furthermore, the fact that the letters written to her father when she was fifteen or sixteen, should be filled with diminutives and puerile pet names. We might say that she did this to please her aging father who was nearing his last trial. But up until the last year of her life, she constantly used expressions of a painful infantilism which surprise us.<sup>16</sup> Did not the extraordinary Chapter XI of the *Story of a Soul* include originally a whole passage on the allegory of the "little bird," which the

<sup>16</sup> Cf. Letters CCXXV, p. 417, and CCXXVII, p. 421.

editors thought ought to be almost entirely suppressed, "in the desire to harmonize fully the passage with the general tonality of Chapter XI"?<sup>17</sup> This is a discreet way of admitting embarrassment in regard to the style of this allegory.

Now it is this very passage, it seems to us, which gives us the key to the difficulty we are considering. The childish complacency with which the Saint describes the maneuver of the "little bird" proceeds only a few paragraphs further on to an extraordinary flight, a page of amazing lyricism — perhaps the most beautiful bit of spiritual literature written in modern times. "O divine Word, You are the adored Eagle. I love You and You draw me to You" . . . etc.<sup>18</sup> How can we explain this contrast which we come across more than once? For one little note written in a childish manner to Celine, there are three or four of amazing depth and maturity. For one passage of puerile wording in a letter to one of her Missionary Brothers there are ten of impressive authority.

Perhaps we should see in this contrast something like a trace of an amazing work. At twenty years of age (it is easy to prove this from the text) Thérèse had arrived at a profound autonomy and a shining fruitfulness in her own experience and in her doctrine. This precocity combined with this perfection is, to say the least, surprising. But what increases our astonishment and also our admiration, is that the Saint had not reached this point by way of a classic development, or by following the usual well-trodden path.

Why try to hide the fact that in this region of her psychological development there is evidence of the precocious orphan, a defective development, and perhaps even a serious instability? It is here that we call upon serious psychological studies, in all sincerity, without emotion, but not without fear, that they may the better bring to light the reasons there could have been for fearing a halt in the development of Thérèse as a child. It is diminishing the stature of the Saints to canonize them from their cradles or to deny the difficulties they knew and the dangers they encountered. It obscures the part of grace not to recognize that Thérèse had to overcome formidable difficulties in her pursuit of perfection. Now we actually are holding the two ends of the chain: the

<sup>17</sup> *Letters*, p. 335.

<sup>18</sup> *Ibid*, p. 337.

frighted point of departure, full of risks, and possible deviation, and the point of arrival — a rare perfection and a surprising precocity. Between these two there is a hinge, psychologically inexplicable: the grace of Christmas 1888. She herself calls it "the night of my conversion," and adds:

"On this blessed night, of which it is written that it shows forth the delights of God Himself, Jesus Who became a Child for love of me, deigned to make me rise from the language and imperfections of childhood. He transformed me in such a way that I could no longer recognize myself."<sup>19</sup>

We have only to take the words in their obvious meaning. A real rightabout-face took place then, in the psychology of Thérèse. She ceased to be a child, in the strict sense of the word. It is really a challenge to normal scientific knowledge. And since St. John of the Cross declares that in the case of the characteristic passive purifications grace triumphs above all, even certain psychological instabilities until then impossible to overcome, should we not perhaps establish without reserve the possibility of such an experience?

There are traces of infantilism in the vocabulary of the Saint which contrast strongly with passages, clearly more numerous, where her adult personality asserts itself victoriously. Could not these infantile articulations have been willed by God as a trace of the risks she ran in her development and over which the graces of God so magnificently triumphed in her?

### *Spiritual Autonomy. Personal Experience and Doctrine*

But we can state that if the personal maturity of St. Thérèse of the Child Jesus raises problems which science alone could not solve, the masterliness of the doctrine which is really hers manifests again, to an even more admirable degree, the intervention of all-powerful grace. From a child of twenty, without special education, she became a master sure of her teaching, and speaking with the authority of mature age.

It is very easy to make fun of the middle class culture of a family of the *petite bourgeoisie*, at the close of the nineteenth century. It is a fact that the initial formation of little Thérèse was no augury of an intellectual or literary giant rising above the

<sup>19</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 351.

ordinary. We know what this word "ordinary" means. We have only to look at the reading material of Thérèse as a child or as an adolescent. We must even add that, because of her health, frequent interruptions made this initial formation sketchy enough.

However, historical objectivity makes it an obligation for us to note that Thérèse was endowed with intelligence beyond the average for children of her age. Mme. Martin's correspondence shows that even from her babyhood Thérèse had a quick mind. When she was at the Benedictines', despite her state of health, she won such success that she incurred the jealousy of her companions who were older but less gifted. She loved to read and remembered what she read with a facility that borders on the miraculous. Even when she was very sick, she quoted from memory long passages from the Gospel or from St. John of the Cross, without missing a single word. They have rightly spoken of her amazing interior power in this realm. She herself tells without false modesty: "God gave me the grace of having my intelligence awaken when I was very young."<sup>20</sup>

However, she never came across a real master who had left his stamp upon her. She never had the opportunity of reading a work of literature or philosophy which made an overwhelming impression upon her.<sup>21</sup> In this sense it is permissible to speak of the banality and even of the blank character of her intellectual development.

Would it be an exaggeration to speak of the danger of impoverishment which entering Carmel meant for a child of fifteen — above all, at the close of the nineteenth century? These are the exact facts: the necessity of working to assure the existence of the Community, little time available for reading, a small number of religious, the absence of any intellectual stimulation, etc., prove

<sup>20</sup> *Story of a Soul*, Chap. I.

<sup>21</sup> One cannot even make an exception of the Abbé Arminjon. One is almost embarrassed by the enthusiasm she manifests in regard to a work of which the literary style makes us smile. The turgid rhetoric of this preacher has nothing attractive nor particularly creative. Must we see in the Saint's estimation of this work a symptom of the culture which was hers at fourteen? However, we must observe that the passages she relishes are those which are substantially the richest — her supernatural instinct guiding her with sure stroke in this choice. Did she not copy a beautiful text in her own handwriting (preserved at the Carmel of Lisieux) which she thought was from this author, but which as a matter of fact proved to be an acknowledged quotation from St. John Chrysostom?

that the danger was not fantastic. Two examples will illustrate at the same time both the reality of this danger and the extraordinary way in which the Saint triumphed over it.

We know how she loved holy Scripture. We must place apart, in a special light, her love for the Gospel. She knew it almost all by heart, and wore it always on her person (she quoted it 193 times, as against eleven quotations in all for the first twenty-two books of the Old Testament). She also freely quoted the Canticle of Canticles, the Psalms, and Isaias. Now she had at her disposal the *Manual of a Christian*, comprising the New Testament and the Psalms. In all likelihood, she asked sometimes for one or another commentary on the Old Testament in the library. But it can be stated affirmatively that she never had a complete Bible in her hands — the usages then in force would not have permitted it. She knew the Old Testament chiefly through a copybook in which Celine, while still in the world, had written down passages which seemed to her especially beautiful, and through the works of St. John of the Cross (where quotations from the Old Testament abound). It is even possible that she knew the Canticle of Canticles only from the many quotations she found in *The Spiritual Canticle* and in the translation of the Breviary. She knew absolutely nothing about certain books of the Old Testament. There was never anything "bookish" about Thérèse. She was exceptionally intuitive. Her contemplative vocation, and the gifts of the Holy Spirit developed amazingly this natural disposition. Instead of being impoverished, she drew from known scattered texts the essential substance of the Old Testament. One text alone from the Old Testament, known probably from Celine's notebook, served as the basis for her entire devotion. It had to do with the prophecy of Isaias in regard to the servant of Yahweh (Chap. 53).<sup>22</sup> This depth of understanding has fooled some authors who thought that the Bible was her bedside book! The Gospel was, but she knew only fragments of the Old Testament — a fact which did not prevent her from laying hold upon its inner substance.

The second example is even more conclusive. St. Thérèse of the Child Jesus has written that at sixteen and seventeen she had no other spiritual nourishment than the works of St. John of the Cross.

<sup>22</sup> *Novissima Verba*, p. 119.

Now the very fact of such reading, and her use of the knowledge thus acquired for her own doctrinal synthesis, are a challenge to probability, and manifest an astonishing psychological maturity.

As one muses on the fact that she was scarcely seventeen, that she had no initiation into either philosophy or theology, that she had a poor education, humanly speaking, that no special atmosphere around her incited her to such reading, that nobody guided her while she was reading, that she had in her hands a rather rugged text without commentaries, one might indeed well speak in regard to this of a personal sudden discovery. A strange maturity — that of a child of seventeen, really self-taught, who read in such a way as to nourish her soul, and to assimilate the essentials, works which at the present time a great many educated adults never get to the point of reading profitably. There is not the slightest exaggeration in speaking of a challenge to probability. From the very beginning of her reading she was captivated by it. Sister Mary of the Angels testified at the beatification process: "One day — I don't know whether she was seventeen — she spoke to me about certain passages in the mysticism of St. John of the Cross with an understanding so far beyond her age that I was left simply amazed by it." Just weigh all the circumstances, and it will become clear that the simple fact of the influence of St. John of the Cross on Thérèse, who was still a novice, manifests a maturity beyond comparison.

The first years of religious life for Thérèse must have been marked by a rapid personal deepening, baffling to the ordinary laws of psychology, and if one might suggest a date which marks a milestone in which we might recognize that autonomy had been reached, we should suggest that of October, 1891, the date on which Père Alexis preached the retreat for the community; it was he who confirmed the personal intuitions of the little Saint and launched her with full sails upon the waves of confidence and love.<sup>23</sup> It was then the end of the two-year period during which the influence of St. John of the Cross upon her was so great: she was eighteen and a half.

But if just the fact alone of the mystical Doctor's influence upon her presupposes already a real maturity of soul, what should we

<sup>23</sup> *Story of a Soul*, Chap. VIII.

say in regard to the profit she made of it for her own doctrinal synthesis? An exhaustive study of the texts would show that no author had had an influence anywhere near comparable to that of St. John of the Cross. One can hardly exaggerate the influence of St. John of the Cross on Thérèse. She did not fail, however, to assimilate his doctrine thoroughly, and at the same time construct her own synthesis with complete independence. What borders on the miraculous is that a child of seventeen totally lacking, as regards her secular and religious development, any intellectual stimuli, met a genius of extraordinary power: she discovered it, and was spiritually nourished by it exclusively for two years, submitted to its influence to the extent of remembering by heart whole passages, and yet does not *copy* a single line in her doctrine. The more one discovers the numerous traces of quoted material made from the works of St. John of the Cross in the *Story of a Soul*, and in the other Theresian documents, the more one stands amazed at the perfect autonomy with which she used them and integrated them into her own synthesis. On the psychological level, we have here a verification of considerable importance. How can one explain so strong an influence at an age when one is so receptive, and yet the autonomy is so evident? She is in no way a commentator: she is herself. At eighteen she is not yet ready to give an account of it clearly. At twenty, in a letter to Celine (July 23, 1893), she makes the first allusion to the Way of Spiritual Childhood. But the *Story of a Soul* tells us that from her nomination as novice mistress (February-March, 1893), she had clearly formulated for herself her Little Way. If she wanted Celine to enter the Carmel of Lisieux (September, 1894) it was "because she was conscious of possessing a spirituality which her sister would not find anywhere else, and it was solely in order to impart this to her that she longed so greatly to have her enter the Carmel of Lisieux."<sup>24</sup>

Let us weigh the words and the facts. She was twenty years old, and already she is in full possession of a doctrine which had not been thus formulated *ex professo* by anyone else. The history of her religious family, nevertheless, offers her illustrious teachers. It includes writers who were saints whose authority has been

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<sup>24</sup> *Documentation of Lisieux.*

recognized for more than three centuries. She knew St. John of the Cross particularly: "But what of it? 'In my Father's house there are many mansions,' Jesus has told us, and that is why I follow the path He maps out for me."<sup>25</sup> In regard to our present research, no phrase could perhaps be more precious: "I follow the path He maps out for me." That is mine; it makes little difference whether others might have followed, or do follow a different path. Could this autonomy, which we know is one of the essential manifestations of maturity of soul, be more clearly formulated?

At twenty she was settled in her certitude, and found herself able to resolve all the problems which her personal spiritual life imposed and those of the souls confided to her.

### *Spiritual Fruitfulness*

She gave herself with a fruitfulness which exerted influence in her own community, and then outside, because of her correspondence, and which before her death she foresaw would spread through the entire world.

The least that one can say is that she was never too self-concerned. The reflexive spirit did not deform her. "I try not to think about myself any more, in anything."<sup>26</sup>

The point has rightly been raised — the *Story of a Soul* proves it — that it was at the time of the gift of herself, in the office of mistress of novices, that she first clearly formulated for herself the essential intuition of her way of spiritual childhood. It was her powerlessness to give the necessary directives to others, united with a desire to fulfill this task to the uttermost, which made her aware of the spiritual attitude for which everything had prepared her. After this date, she is truly the one who gives.

We have only to reread the letters to Celine, written in 1894, for example, and we shall see with what authority the Saint speaks. Or observe in the *Novissima Verba* or in the *Counsels and Souvenirs* with what clear judgment and decisive action she formed her novices. She is completely opposite to those timid souls who are afraid of responsibilities and prefer to assure their own security rather than the good of the souls confided to them. Like Jeanne d'Arc, she did not fear the risk or the war. A study of her

<sup>25</sup> *Letters*, p. 412.

<sup>26</sup> *Letters*, p. 413.

behavior in the midst of her novices brings to light her independence as regards the opinion of others and her complete disregard for the possible consequences of her words or her actions when she thought it was her duty to speak out or to act. She acted thus right up to her last days in the infirmary.<sup>27</sup>

The same note of authority and independence fills the letters that she wrote to her missionary Brothers. They are not numerous but their evidence is precious. With extreme delicacy, but without appearing otherwise disturbed by the role she was playing, Thérèse speaks as having authority. From all the evidence, it is her correspondents who are the disciples and she is teaching them. The whole of letter CCIII, of May 9, 1897, to Père Roulland, is marked with this certitude of her own way, and the certitude, also, that her correspondent is called to follow her "way": "I do not understand, Brother, that you seem to doubt your immediate entry into heaven, if the infidels took your life."<sup>28</sup> And two pages farther on: "That, Brother, is my idea of the good God's justice, my way is all trust and love, I don't understand souls who are afraid of such a loving Friend."

We find exactly the same note in letter CCXXIX to Père Belliere, dated July 18, 1897 . . . "I feel that we must go to heaven by the same road — suffering joined with love." And one, like the other of her two "Brothers" was, in fact, invited to place himself in her school.

Let us not be led astray by pictures. The Little Way was not made for cowards. There is no minimizing of the traditional ideal of sanctity about it. The personal experience of Thérèse, as well as her teaching, manifests such an autonomy in regard to sources, near or far, such a fecundity in the gift of herself that one must well recognize that she had reached the fullness of the stature of Christ. She who wrote and lived the Act of Oblation to the Merciful Love of God was one of those royal souls that St. John of the Cross loved. In order to become a child again, she had necessarily to reach very swiftly a full maturity which shone forth radiantly. It was of her that it is written: "Being made perfect in a short time (because she had reached her full development) she fulfilled a long time" (Wisd. 4:13).

<sup>27</sup> *Novissima Verba*, p. 183.

<sup>28</sup> *Letters*, p. 392.

*There ought to be many more spiritual leaders than there are — particularly among Religious. Father Bruno Hagspiel, one of the country's great retreat masters, blames stunted growth and lists some causes.*

## Stunted Growth

Father Bruno Hagspiel, S.V.D.

LET us face the fact that we Religious are the shock troops standing between Satan and his domination of the world in which we live. Naturally his onslaught, using every possible means against spiritual life, will be truly diabolical. Today he has a most varied arsenal of subtle weapons: literature, TV and radio, movies, to mention the most obvious. Therefore, we must watch and ward most ceaselessly lest what appears innocent and harmless turns out to be completely treacherous. Let us consider separately each device used by the devil.

Probably never in the history of man has there been such an outpouring of LITERATURE in every possible form. Modern inventions have outpaced themselves to such an extent that honest editors realize most of the material they are called upon to process into type is drivel of the lowest degree.

### Profane Literature

The three M's dominate many newspapers: if an item does not involve MONEY or MARRIAGE or MURDER, it is hardly worth printing. Circulation might drop! The public palate can stand only the most acutely seasoned poison. An item must be sensational, or better yet nauseating; otherwise readers might turn to the competing newspaper. Tremendous emphasis is placed upon sex in its crudest forms. Indeed, Professor P. Sorokin, head of the Harvard Research Center in Creative Altruism, says, "we are completely surrounded by the rising tide of sex which is flooding every com-

partment of our culture, every section of our social life." And, again, "we are becoming victims of a sex mania as malignant as cancer and as socially menacing as communism." He further points to the upsurge of sex crimes, and the actual obsession with sex in every branch of life — reading matter, advertising, radio, TV, stage plays, movies, popular songs, pictures. . . .

It is plain, therefore, that constant reading of newspapers of this type does not tend to uplift the soul but rather to drag it down into the mire of sin. Even if newspapers relate only indifferent temporal matters, how can Religious habitually indulge in reading them without sustaining heavy spiritual losses? Their minds will be filled with all kinds of reflections totally foreign to their proper vocation. Since newspapers, being a forbidden delight, inevitably appeal to the weakness of human nature, how easy it is then to waste time on such transitory matters instead of on things of the soul. Superiors must carefully supervise this point of contact with the world, lest it becomes a cause of the relaxation and eventually of the decline of the religious spirit.

It is inevitable that the mushy and sentimental articles in many magazines would prove harmful to the virtue of chastity. Moreover, few magazines today are without colored or lavishly executed illustrations which offend Christian modesty and decorum. Such devices of the devil tend to keep the soul in a state of unrest and would gradually dull that delicacy of conscience which is the hallmark of a good Religious.

A further step in the wrong direction will be taken if habitual reading of newspapers and magazines leads one to take up as a regular routine the reading of profane literature — novels, romances, mysteries with a dash of the "love" interest, etc. What do we as Religious have to do with such entirely inappropriate matters? These things pertain to and relate only such events as belong in the world. We have taken vows to leave the world behind.

### *Channels of the World*

In regard to MOVIES, can we seek for higher authority on earth than the words of our Holy Father, Pope Pius XII, who declared on Nov. 4, 1955, that "they are a spiritual and moral problem of immense importance." He pointed out how the film daily "speaks

with its powerful language" to enormous legions of men, women, and children. With fatherly solicitude he emphasized how carefully we must evaluate each movie before allowing ourselves to be exposed to its influence, which truly can be so subtle that, again, the poison is administered with honey.

A prominent editor<sup>1</sup> has stated: "Art for Art's sake' is . . . frequently advanced to support the claim for unrestricted freedom of expression. . . . The truth that makes men free will not be gained by indulgence and license."

The Holy Father has, in his encyclical *Vigilanti Cura on Improper Motion Pictures*, described the "lamentable progress . . . in the portrayal of sin and vice" and has pointed out how such portrayals "often unfortunately serve as an incentive to evil and passion and are subordinated to sordid gain."

The unrestricted use of RADIO would lead to many and grievous abuses and open up wide avenues for worldliness in the Religious life. There is hardly any need to list the various reasons: mushy programs, "dramatic" scenes of violence, in which all the turbulent emotions of tragic humanity are fearfully portrayed, and silly love songs many of which have sugar-coated double meanings or downright lechery in their content. Yet there are also many useful and practical programs.

In general the rule should be for superiors *not to permit a special radio to be installed in any private room*. An exception can be made for the shut-ins and bedridden in the infirmary, but the use of even these radios should be regulated by the superiors. The radio in a community room should always be controlled by the superior of the house or some authorized responsible member of the community; it should never be used during silence periods. TELEVISION, called by its critics "THE MONSTER," would be exactly that if it brought all Hollywood into the convent. Of course, it is true that there are superb religious programs like those of Bishop Sheen and those of Archbishop Cushing's TV Chapel in Boston, to mention just a couple. For such programs, there can often be found some friend of the community or some businessman, who will either lend a set or arrange to have one temporarily hooked

<sup>1</sup> Martin Quigley, Editor: *Motion Picture Herald* and *Motion Picture Daily*, in a release by Paulist Feature Service, Washington, D. C.

up. TV concerns are only too glad to rent equipment for such occasions at a moderate price. In general, however, TV should be thrust into the outer darkness.

Lest we be misunderstood: We are speaking of the TV as it is today. It is not an evil in itself, but today it is one of the best tools of Satan to carry out his plans in the world. Not until we can have a radical change in the TV programs, a greater variety of unobjectionable, decent programs, should religious houses think of having a TV set of their own and always under the proper supervision and rigid control of the respective superior.

In kitchens, laboratories, and workshops, TV and even radio should not be permitted. It destroys as nothing else can the spirit of reflection, of interior recollection, and of prayer. Can a Religious easily walk in the presence of God, in silence, when the ears are being assailed by soap operas, hillbilly music, and night club humor?

If superiors allow TV in the convent, these two facts will emerge: it will be practically impossible to control the use of TV in religious houses, first, as to the actual programs, and, second, as to the time of day when the TV or radio can be turned on. If once the TV or radio is permitted to be turned on during a period hitherto consecrated to silence, what a victory the devil has won! Then, that community might just as well throw overboard the chapter on silence in its constitution. Here in the U.S.A. it is especially difficult to stop turning TV or radio on when sports events such as ball games, football spectacles, etc., are scheduled.

### Televidiots

In discussing the "One-eyed Monster" of TV, one does not have to be an extremist to feel alarmed. Statistics show that approximately 40 million sets are in use in the U.S.A.; and according to recent surveys the American child spends about 18 hours each week before the TV. More than one commentator has spoken of our era becoming a "race of spectators" and a "generation of televidiots." We need not be pessimists, but we should apply the simple test: Does TV help or hinder us from attaining our spiritual goal in life? If there be any doubt in our mind — then away with it!

Even in hospitals, sickrooms, infirmaries, etc., is it so important to have TV or radio as a continuous thing? The sick could spend much more of their radio time in good spiritual or other unobjectionable reading, prayer, and contemplation. Certainly many of the programs available are no more suitable for ill people than they are for children. Columnist Jack Mabley has pointed out in the *Chicago Daily News* on numerous occasions that more than 2500 crimes of violence including 980 murders are shown in a year on the four Chicago TV stations alone, so that children who watch only an average of 12 hours a week see every conceivable manner of killing by gunfire, strangulation, stabbing, poisoning, drowning, suffocating, and beating. This is to say nothing of the full scale portrayal of base emotions and passions enacted before them.

### *Defend the Sanctuary of Home and Cloister*

In his letter to the Bishops of Italy on January 1, 1954, *I Rapidi Progressi*, the Holy Father conceded that TV's advantages include a splendid conquest of science, leading to a better understanding, more cordial feelings, and better reciprocal co-operation among nations. But while he points to these benefits and also to the part that TV can play in spreading the Gospel message, he is also alarmed by the serious dangers, abuses, and evils to which TV can be perverted and is being perverted by human weakness and malice. Speaking merely of the terrible impact TV can have on the family circle, the Supreme Pontiff asks, "How then can we not be horrified at the thought that this poisoned atmosphere of materialism, of frivolity, of hedonism, which too often is found in so many theaters, can by means of television be brought into the very sanctuary of the home? Nothing is more fatal to the spiritual health of a country. . . ."

How much more strongly then should the sanctuary of the cloister be defended from the invasion of TV! Indeed, the Holy Father continues, "To you, Venerable Brothers, We turn first of all, and to all the clergy, in this connection making Our own the words of St. Paul to Timothy: 'I charge thee, in the sight of God and Jesus Christ, who will judge the living and the dead by his coming and his kingdom; preach the word, be urgent in season,

out of season; reprove, entreat, rebuke with all patience and teaching" (2 Tim. 4:1-2). Truly superiors, no less than parents should beware lest "they may not have to weep, when it is too late over the spiritual ruins of lost innocence in the souls of their charges" as Pope Pius XII points out in the closing words of his letter.

The following pointers the writer received from an eminent member of our American Hierarchy.

Feast of the Conversion of St. Paul  
January 25, 1957

Dear Father Bruno,

You ask for my candid opinion about the effects of TV and radio on our religious communities.

Effects of TV on religious life: as I see it, these are some of the effects:

1. The very least one can say is that it is a grand waste of time. That does not mean that every religious would use much time watching TV every day. But it does mean that the majority of times TV is watched there would be no permanent good effect for the religious life . . . and in too many instances there would be positive bad effects.

2. The most dangerous effect of TV, and one that is almost impossible to measure, is what it does to one's power of thinking and to his willingness to put forth the effort to think. In some ways, to my thinking, this is the most dangerous side of TV and it holds for all. While watching TV the person is passive; it is an attractive form of recreation; it only requires passive presence and no effort on the part of the watcher. He is acted upon — he does not act.

3. Unconsciously, one's way of thinking is influenced if he watches TV enough. When an idea is put into the mind often enough, it will have some effect.

4. Mental Prayer: I have asked many religious what effect watching TV has on a period of mental prayer that follows the TV watching. Inevitably the answer is, as one would expect, many distractions. This is true even if mental prayer follows much later.

5. Temptations: sometimes these can be "contra sextum" as there are certainly many suggestive phrases, ways of dressing, situations, etc., if I can judge by the times I have watched TV. Enough about that point. But frequently, for the religious and priest especially, the temptation can be nothing more than the picturing an ideal home life, e.g., a fine, good-looking father of the family who takes good care of his family and loves every one of them; service and generosity towards her husband and children; their faces shining with the grace of God in their souls; apparently no material problem to render that picture unattractive. Then, if you have a priest or religious, who feels misunderstood by superiors, or one who is strongly attracted to family life, etc., WHAT WOULD YOU EXPECT THE DEVIL TO DO? The answer is easy, isn't it, Father?

6. I heard one member of the American Hierarchy phrase it this way: "It is foolish to enter the convent to get away from the world and then to drag in the world after her" (he meant TV).

7. A number of laymen and laywomen have said to me that since they have a TV set there has been more quarreling and fighting in their home than before. I have seen at least one case of that in a religious house.

8. I wonder whether a priest or religious really has any time that he (she) can devote to a TV set, if he (she) is striving to be the saint that God is calling him (her) to be. It would seem that each one ought to be preparing self for the Illuminative state.

9. All that I have said is directed against TV. However, in a lesser way it applies (at least almost all of it does) to radio. Since the TV has appeared I think, radio is the lesser of two evils. But it is not an unmitigated good. It can be more easily controlled than TV.

10. Recently, I visited a new mother house of a religious order and there "big as life" was a magnificent TV set in the community room. I wonder what will happen in that community room when there is some TV program on that most superiors would consider fit for religious, e.g., Bishop Sheen's program? Will there be that relaxing conversation, either all in the room participating or at least little groups in this large room joyfully entertaining one another? I don't think so, do you? I have entered homes of lay people where there could be no conversation because TV set was what one and all wanted to watch . . . not to listen to or talk with the visitor. I am afraid that I have taken up much time. But this problem seems to me to be a serious one.

Praying the Holy Spirit to guide you in writing these articles and that He bless them in their effects on religious, most of whom are so desirous of "giving God" everything. The "world" creeps in and changes their perspective. So God's grace is all-important.

Fraternally yours in Christ.

And may we add this letter received from a mother general of a community of more than 3500 Sisters. It surely contains plenty of food for thought. (Similar letters were received from almost three dozen major superiors.)

February 9, 1957

Reverend and Dear Father:

Gladly do I comply with your request to jot down some notes stating my reasons for not permitting the Sisters of our congregation to have television sets in their convents. At the risk of being considered one-sided or old-fashioned, I will make known to you my honest convictions regarding TV in a convent. The spirit of the world is striving to make vast inroads into houses of religious. Even those who enter the convent in order to break with the world, to get away from persons, places, and everything that would prevent them from dying to the world and living only for God, may find similar dangers in a convent of worldly religious. God forbid that this should be so, but the spirit of the times is striving to force itself into God's own domain — the cloister.

Zealous superiors of religious congregations today are much concerned lest this dangerous spirit of the world gradually and subtly work its way into God's holy house, cool the fervor of the religious who are striving for perfection, dim the brightness of their outlook toward things divine, and leave its imprint on their souls. These

superiors strive by every means possible to prevent such a tragedy. It is in the interest of their own Sisters in particular that they use preventive measures to keep the spirit of the world from penetrating into the convent. Whether the Sisters appreciate it or not, it is for their own benefit that their superiors are vigilant in their efforts to safeguard them.

. . . I am not condemning TV as such because it has possibilities for good if used according to God's laws. Some insist that TV is a means of furthering education, but most of the channels are beyond the reach of true education. Even if educational channels were open, there would always be the danger of imperceptibly falling a prey to false philosophy because many would not recognize it until the damage has been done.

I am thoroughly convinced that TV is not an instrument suitable for the convent homes of the Sisters. Any thinking mind can conceive the danger to which the Sisters are exposed if they seek pleasure and recreation in watching television. Down through the years practically every order of regular observance would not permit their Sisters to attend shows, dramas, and places of amusement because, as they said, "That is no place for a Sister." Now should these shows, dramas, and places of amusement be brought into the convent for the Sisters to see and enjoy? Such frequent or daily entertainment is bound to leave its imprint on the minds and hearts of those who watch it. Some people are more impressionable than others. Consider a young person who may be struggling with a temptation against her vocation. The apparent happiness of life in the world is portrayed on TV in a most vivid and impressionable manner. It may take days and weeks of struggle to blot out the impressions. There are TV programs absolutely unfit to be viewed by Spouses of Christ. That Sisters should have access to such pictures in their convent is almost unthinkable.

TV can become dangerous to morality. There are demonstrations and showings which may not be improper for lay people but are entirely out of place in a convent. TV can become a great danger for Sisters who are striving to keep their hearts and minds pure and holy.

TV besides being a danger to clean thinking and a source of temptation to many, causes a diminution of the spirit of prayer. The imagination is filled with TV pictures. It is humanly impossible to prevent these scenes from making their appearance and interfering with mental and vocal prayer.

And not least of the reasons for keeping television out of the convent is the resultant loss of time. Study and preparation for school are frequently neglected or performed in a slipshod manner in order to find time to watch TV. There would be the temptation to postpone the prayer hour so as not to miss a certain program. Some Sisters would want to stay up late, because, as it is said, "The best programs are shown later in the evening." A few religious would be tempted to watch TV secretly without the permission or the knowledge of the superior. The poor superior would wear herself out trying to satisfy everyone in the choice of programs. In her efforts to please all, the superior might displease all. TV would bring discord and dissension into once peaceful convent homes.

At the present time attention is directed mainly to the danger of television, but that does not mean the Sisters should have free access to the radio. It, too, can be a dangerous factor in introducing worldliness into a convent. What has been said about the use of TV may be applied, perhaps in a lesser degree, to the radio, but it is most important that the superior exercise strict vigilance with regard to its use. A good Sister will co-operate with her superior with regard to TV and the radio.

They should be glad if television sets are not permitted in their convents, realizing that it is for the greater good of the congregation and the individual Sisters.

Sincerely yours in Christ.

Have these pages seemed too harsh and biting? Yet how many superiors have seen this worldliness, this terrible trend of our day and have acted with courage and firmness to withstand it. It is evident from many communications the writer has received. Here are the words of one of them: "If abuses creep in, it is because the local superior does not have the courage. I'm fearless on these points and our good religious appreciate it. No Sunday papers or worldly magazines get in. I ban novels. In the province's houses 15 minutes of the news of the day is allowed on TV and nothing else. In the past few years we have seen very few movies. TV must never be a form of *entertainment* for religious."

As far back as 1938, the then Holy Father Pius XI, addressing the general chapter of the Capuchin Order, said: "I present to you . . . a paternal word: 'YOU MUST BE FIRM!' . . . a hard word, but full of love worthy of our Saviour. Firmness (strictness), especially when it is a question of discipline of the whole Order and of the individual houses, is something holy and necessary, for it is discipline which keeps life alive and nourishes it. Without it life is stunted and weak.

"This discipline I recommend not only to religious communities, but also to the bishops, the priests, and the entire clergy. For alas, nowadays the air is impregnated, as it were, with ideas and maxims of false independence.

"Therefore, we must be on our guard that they do not enter also into the ranks of the clergy, for without strict discipline nothing great can be achieved for the honor and glory of ouraviour nor for the salvation of souls."

*One of the reasons for retarded spiritual growth is given here by Father O'Keefe, a Servite, serving St. John Berchmans' parish in Detroit.*

## Insufficient Growth: Some Unfinished Business of the Liturgical Revival

*Father Robert O'Keefe, O.S.M.*

IN A previous issue of *SPIRITUAL LIFE*, the distinguished Dominican writer, Father Pepler, discussed the long-standing rift between personal prayer and piety and the liturgy of the Church. Father Pepler stated that in times past the ordinary faithful Christians had little opportunity of really "tasting the word of God" and feeding his prayer life with the riches of Sacred Scripture and the writings of the Fathers of the Church. Nowadays, however, according to Father Pepler, the ordinary Christian is abundantly supplied with the necessary equipment for entering into the spirit of liturgical prayer, and he does take an active and enthusiastic part in liturgical spirituality when the opportunity (and a sympathetic pastor) present themselves.

However well supplied today's Christian may be with the liturgical books and the liturgical spirit in comparison with his ancestors, the sad fact remains that for thousands of religious men and women in active congregations in this country there is still "little opportunity of really tasting the word of God and of feeding their daily prayer directly on that" in the course of their daily religious life.

No one needs to take a Gallup poll of religious institutes in this country to realize that only a small part of the program of the liturgical revival, or even the liturgical spirit, has penetrated

the thick walls of both convent and monastery here in the United States. No matter how handsomely modern the design of the parish convent, and how up to date are the materials used in the building of that convent, the design of the modern religious prayer life remains rigidly that of the spiritual architects of the seventeenth-century French school of piety. Common prayer consists, for the most part, of meditation read in the chapel, and long morning prayers compiled from the favorite manuals of the present or former superior. Rarely is Sacred Scripture itself read in chapel, as the food for contemplation and spiritual nourishment. More often it is the *Imitation of Christ* or other works of spirituality, which stress the individual's relation to God independently of the Mystical Body of Christ. Although it is true that most congregations have discontinued the practice of receiving Holy Communion before Mass, that convent chapel is still rare where daily conventual Mass is sung or recited communally with the priest.

Let's take daily conventual Mass as a starting point. Many, perhaps most, teaching and nursing congregations have adopted the practice of letting their members use daily missals every day before Mass. But this is only the first step toward active and intelligent participation. It should not be the last. Using the daily missal is not the end: it is only the beginning of the movement toward more active and intelligent participation. It can be said literally, I think, that the missal has been oversold. Its silent use now by thousands of religious and lay people does not truly carry out the papal directive that "constant and earnest effort *must* be made to unite the congregation in spirit as much as possible with the Divine Redeemer, so that their lives may be daily more enriched with more abundant holiness and greater glory be given to the heavenly Father." The second step toward active participation was indicated by the Pope in *Mediator Dei* when he said: "They are also to be commended who strive to make the liturgy *even in an external way* a sacred act, in which all who are present may share. This can be done in more than one way when, for instance, the whole congregation . . . either answer the priest in an orderly and fitting manner, or *sing hymns* suitable to the different parts of the Mass, *do both*."

Unfortunately the number of those to be commended has been

very, very few indeed, in comparison with the vast number who have been willing to slide along in the old groove, too fearful to leave the safe way of the recent past. The effort the Pope speaks of in *Mediator Dei* is "constant and earnest."

Without assessing blame, it can be safely stated that the liturgical revival is only in its infancy in the community life of most active congregations of Brothers and Sisters in this country. Dialogue Mass, with the community reciting the Gloria, Creed, Sanctus, and Agnus Dei would seem to be the next logical step upward for most congregations of religious. If intelligibility were the only criterion of liturgical excellence, a modified form of the dialogue Mass, with an opening hymn instead of alternate prayers at the foot of the altar, and an Offertory and Communion hymn in place of recited prayers at those times during the Mass, would seem to be a more effective way of communicating the Christian spirit than the bare-as-bones recitation of the altar boy responses by the whole community. Singing together at Mass engages another dimension of the human spirit not involved in the mere recitation of prayers together. St. Augustine noticed this when he stated: "I feel our souls are moved to the ardor of piety by the sacred words more powerfully when these words are sung than when they are not sung, and that all the affections of our soul are moved by the various modes of the music by which they are stirred up to an indescribable and secret sympathy." In his most recent encyclical on sacred music, from which the above is quoted, the Pope declares: "Sacred music, by its power and excellence lifts up to God the minds of the faithful present and makes the liturgical prayers of the Christian community more fervent and alive." The superiority of sung prayer, however, is a fact admitted only in discussion, and hardly ever is this belief carried over into practice. Instead the mental conviction of the few remains unimplemented by the many because not enough minds are as yet convinced.

Of course, the most excellent way to participate is still the high Mass, which, of course, must be sung in Latin, a language which hides the meaning (let's face it) rather than reveals it, for most present-day religious.

From the point of view of anyone who has the sketchiest acquaintance with the excellence of liturgical prayer as outlined

a *Mediator Dei* it will easily be seen that the customary manner in which conventual Mass is "attended" is almost entirely innocent of any influence of the modern liturgical apostolate.

Probably the reason is that faithfulness to the letter of their founder's rule is an obstacle to the introduction (perhaps I should say substitution) of more solid spiritual fare, such as an abridged recitation of the Divine Office, a daily reading of Holy Scripture and of the Fathers.

The only answer that can be given to this objection in a brief article such as this is that the constitutions and rule, like garden walls, are intended to keep out baneful influences such as laxity and laziness. They are not constructed to block out light and air and life-giving waters, especially the waters of grace and the breath of the Holy Spirit, pulsating in the Scriptural and Patristic texts which make up the warp and woof of liturgical prayer.

If we expect the spiritual life of teaching and nursing Brothers and Sisters to become once again "a watered garden" we must open the floodgates to allow these words of Christ and His saints to irrigate the thirsting souls desiccated by years of spiritual dryness. These are the waters of which Christ spoke when He said: "He that shall drink of the waters that I shall give him will not thirst forever. But the water I will give him shall become in him a fountain springing up into life everlasting."

## BOOK REVIEWS

THE CATHOLIC CHURCH, U.S.A., edited by Louis J. Putz, C.S.C., Fides, Chicago, Ill., 1956, 415 pp., \$5.95

Father Augustine Maydieu, a French Dominican, visited the United States in 1953 for the purpose of learning about the position of the Catholic Church in our country. Convinced that he had made a significant discovery of the particular genius of the Church in America, he planned a study reflecting his ideas on this subject. When Father Maydieu died without completing his monographs, Father Louis J. Putz, C.S.C., a professor of theology at Notre Dame, took up the task. Just what was Father Maydieu's "significant discovery" as to the nature of the genius of the Church we do not know. Father Putz does not venture any explanation, but it seems he has left it to the reader to consider its nature by reflection on the collection of essays.

This is a book which attempts a great deal and accomplishes pathetically little. I do not question the existence of the need for a study of the Catholic Church in the United States, but such an undertaking requires by its very nature a great deal of time and thought.

*The Catholic Church, U.S.A.* is divided into three broad divisions. Part one deals with the history and structure of the Church in the United States. In the second part, the Church is considered under the aspects of her regional diversity. Section three notes some of the influences the Church has had on the country as a whole. It is quite clear that four hundred and fifteen pages are insufficient for the development of even one of these parts.

Father Gustave Weigel, S.J., in his essay, "An Introduction to American Catholicism," makes some very questionable statements. His attempt to portray the American Catholic as indistinguishable from others is to the extreme. He remarks that: "It is not rare for a Catholic to discover only after years of friendly relations that the man who works next to him is a Catholic also." Any Catholic layman can testify that such a discovery after even one year would be a surprise. Americans are interested in religion. Both political and social events give rise to lively discussion, and not infrequently is Catholicism concerned.

Father Henry J. Browne's heroic attempt to sum up in fifteen pages the history of the American Church from its earliest days to modern times is unrealistic. Despite the demands created by limited space, the writer concerns himself with the development of particular problems

to the detriment of a sweeping view which is a necessary requisite for the success of any of these brief essays. The "history" ends with the nineteen twenties. It wholly ignores the significant contributions made to the Church during the past thirty years.

Father Edward A. Ryan, S.J., writes an excellent chapter, "The Holy See and the Church in the United States," but this essay is noticeably lacking in treatment of important matters in this century. This defect is rather common throughout the book.

Monsignor Edward G. Murray in his essay, "The Catholic Church in New England," overlooks many of the real problems facing the Church in that area. He is quite optimistic about the future acceptance of a large increase of Negroes in New England. He describes the Catholics in New England as offering "an outstretched hand and a united front in every way." The largest Negro population in New England is found in Catholic Boston, where racial prejudice is still deeply rooted among many Catholics. Monsignor Murray does not mention the great interest in Catholicism which developed among the intellectuals in New England about the middle of the past century. A matter of such importance assuredly merits a place in this essay. There is evidence of oversimplification, yet it is clear that the task given the Monsignor was a most unusual and even impossible one.

This book suffers greatly from want of real editing. Beginning with the mention in Bishop Wright's preface, Archbishop Cushing's remark, made at a C.I.O. convention several years ago, that no member of the American hierarchy had a parent who was college educated is later repeated in five chapters of the book. This statement has a social significance, but its frequent repetition is surprising.

In summary, I find this a most unfortunate book and one that is not to do much harm. The picture of the Catholic Church as developed in some of the essays is one hardly acceptable to any thinking American Catholic. A common error of this work is the almost general acceptance of the Plymouth Colony as the seat and *standard* of American culture. As a result, our Catholic American culture is regarded as foreign because it developed later. Must we regard all Anglo-Saxon influences as American and all other influences as "foreign"? Catholicism's universal character is the antithesis of Nationalism; this cannot be said of Anglicanism, Lutheranism, and the Orthodox sects. Would that Father Hatz had given greater care to this study, especially in his selection of the respective writers. Some of the essays are well written and interesting. They indicate the quality the work as a whole should manifest.

Father Adrian, O.C.D., Boston, Mass.

THE LITTLE OFFICE OF THE BLESSED VIRGIN MARY: ACCORDING TO THE ROMAN BREVIARY TOGETHER WITH PRAYERS FOR THE USE OF THE THIRD SECULAR ORDER OF OUR BLESSED LADY OF MOUNT CARMEL AND ST. TERESA OF JESUS. Edited by Philip Foley, O.C.D. Hubertus, Wis., Carmel of Holy Hill, 1956, 111 pp., \$1.50

At the second national congress of the Third Secular Order of Our Lady of Mount Carmel, held in 1953, in Boston, the resolutions committee suggested a new edition of the *Little Office* for the important purpose of uniformity. The new edition is a triumph of revision and was published and ready for distribution to the tertiaries at their third national congress in Detroit, in October, 1956.

To anyone familiar with the usual editions of the *Little Office* — small pages cramped with Latin and English in confusing, continuous columns; headings and rubrics in red, gilt or red-edged pages and black covers; missal style, this new Discalced Carmelite office must seem like something heralding the atomic age. Plain covers in smart, brown plastic give the appearance of the small notebook or vest-pocket memorandum so popular today. A gold hour-glass design is set in the lower corner of the front cover. The pages are strong, white paper; the print is large, (with those who wear bifocals in mind); the type is black and white throughout. Only English is used. The frontispiece is a pen-and-ink sketch of Our Lady of Mount Carmel by Gerard Patrick Rooney of Boston.

In the text, rubrics have been simplified according to the changes effective January 1, 1956, from the Sacred Congregation of Rites, and it is surprising to find how much stronger and more liturgical the *Little Office* emerges from the pruning. The English is the good, plain English translation of the New Testament and Psalms made under the patronage of the Episcopal Committee of the Confraternity of Christian Doctrine. There are no "thous" and "thees." The translation was made from the Latin Psalter of the Pontifical Biblical Institute approved by Pope Pius XII. Saying this *Little Office*, one is at first conscious of an awkwardness in oneself, of need to concentrate, for the old, high English rhythms are not here, thus polarizing the fact that this is prayer, not poetry. Gradually also, realization comes that this prayer is dynamically Mary-directed: that it brings all our great needs and our small to her with a simplicity that betokens her presence close and real.

Briefs of historical explanation preface each of the Hours. At the end is an indulgenced five-minute *Office* that may be recited alone or with others on beginning a journey. It is called *The Itinerary* and is a blessed possession in our age. Opposite the opening page has been set an ancient bit of rhyme. The quaint lines place the *Little Office of Our Lady* in daily living, and demonstrate, I think, the depth of these mysteries. Our Lady will continually share with us if we let her.

At Matins bound, at Prime reviled,  
 Condemned to death at Tierce,  
 Nailed to the Cross at Sext,  
 At None, His blessed side they pierced,  
 They take Him down at Vesper-tide,  
 In grave at Compline lay.  
 Who henceforth bid His Church observe  
 These seven-fold Hours always.

Some years ago the Morgan Library in New York held an exhibit of its incomparable collection of medieval books of hours. A columnist for *The Sun* wrote in exalted prose, I remember, of all that was lost to the world since men and women had ceased to enrich their daily lives with the prayers of the *Little Hours*. His failure to realize that many daily recite the *Little Office of Our Lady* is excusable, for it is not common among the laity, excepting members of third orders. But it does not seem too much to hope, now that Mary's *Little Office* may come back to the multitudes. An edition such as this one is not for tertiaries alone, it is for all. Simple and lovely prayer, in English, modern and timeless, practical and holy, inexpensive though above all price, it is made happily available now to a world that awaits the future with its eyes on Our Lady, and small ease in its heart.

Mary Kiely, Providence, R. I.

## THE CATHOLIC VIEWPOINT ON RACE RELATIONS,

by John LaFarge, S.J., Catholic Viewpoint Series, Hanover House, Garden City, N. Y., 190 pp., \$2.95

A book on this subject cannot help but bring forth something like the self-criticism of Catholics uttered by the Cardinal in *The Last Currah*: "New York produces an Al Smith and what do we produce — Skeffington!" America outside the Church has produced a Lincoln in the field of race relations; what of America inside?

Father John LaFarge, S.J., answers this question briefly but clearly

in this slim volume. Obviously the part entitled "The Catholic Position: The Record" shows up our glaring inconsistencies when compared with that on "The Catholic Position: Principles." Perhaps nowhere does this inconsistency reveal itself more crucially than in the areas of integration of housing and schools; but it is precisely here that doctrine must be brought to bear upon indifference, so that Catholics may learn, in the words of Most Rev. Joseph Francis Rummel, Archbishop of New Orleans, that "racial segregation as such is morally wrong and sinful because it is a denial of the unity and solidarity of the human race as conceived by God in the creation of man in Adam and Eve . . . , because it is basically a violation of the dictates of justice and the mandate of love, which in obedience to God's will must regulate the relations between all men."

The doctrine of the Mystical Body of Christ is fundamental here, and from the very outset Father LaFarge, who is one of the pioneers of the Catholic Interracial Council, places this doctrine where it belongs — as the foundation stone of the solution of our race problem. The leadership of the Church cannot be mistaken either, as witness the Catholic Record of Archbishop O'Boyle who first integrated schools in Washington, D. C., and Archbishop Rummel who "integrated the priesthood" of New Orleans. They are merely following the directives of His Holiness, Pope Pius XII, who wrote to the American Hierarchy: "We confess that we feel a special paternal affection, which is certainly inspired by heaven, for the Negro people dwelling among you; for in the field of religion and education we know they need special care and comfort and are very deserving of it. . . ."

But leadership has been given. What has our implementation of these directives been? Brilliant, but only in spots. The Friendship Houses of New York, Chicago, Washington, D. C., and Portland, Ore., are shining examples of active Catholics who really believe in the words: "Love thy neighbor." Catholic Interracial Councils have been organized for fifteen years, and exist today in more than a score of cities and towns of the North and South. But what are these few examples of organized Catholic Action for the colored among the millions of demands for co-operation in the work of integration?

As in every field, race relationships are primarily *personal* relationships. If we truly believe that "in Christ Jesus there is neither slave nor free, but all are one," then our actions should speak louder than our words. Sad to say, the Churches are still the most segregated institutions in our society; which is an admission that the Churches are not acting like *The Church*, the Body of Christ.

*The Catholic Viewpoint on Race Relations* is a calm, dispassionate statement of a problem, the principles which will solve it, and the progress that has been made. Perhaps a need for greater cohesion in the organization of religious integration is indicated. Otherwise all our efforts in this direction will go for naught. For this cohesion, there is no greater cement than the bond of charity that links all members of Christ's Mystical Body. Such charity has not been as evident as it should be.

Father Denis, O.C.D., Peterboro, N. H.

**THE FOOT OF THE CROSS**, by Father William Faber, The Peter Reilly Co., Philadelphia, Pa., 1956, 406 pp., \$3.95

In his preface to this Marian classic Father Faber states that in the writing of this work he was haunted with the fear that "when he had said all he could in the best way he could, it should always seem so little to be said of Mary, that it almost appeared as if it had better not have been said at all." For a hundred years now countless readers have been proving to themselves how totally unfounded this fear of Father Faber's was. What he says about Mary in this book has a value, a beauty, and a power that few other Marian books have. If those moving words of his that comprise this book had never been written, the world of Marian literature would be much the poorer for it. And so it is a great pleasure to welcome this new edition of *The Foot of the Cross*.

It is particularly appropriate that this book be reissued at this time, for these are days of cosmic sorrow, universal upheaval, untold suffering, widespread darkness of mind. These are indeed trying times, and we need the assurance which Mary, our Sorrowful Mother, gives us that suffering and sorrow have a very special value in God's eyes, that through the path of suffering we attain unto true friendship with Christ.

If the surest way to Christ is through Mary, then surely the best way of knowing our suffering Redeemer is through the sorrowful, suffering Mother. The more we know of the sorrowful Mother the more we know of Christ. As the author states it: "The amount of her sufferings will be the index of the magnificence of His love for her. The depth of her pains will come the nearest of all things to fathom the abyss of her love for Him. Her far-rolling sea of sorrow will measure the grandeur of her holiness." That is why this book is so valuable, because in a manner at once delicate and probing Father Faber explores the world of Mary's sorrows. This is no cold, clinical accounting of what Mary suffered; rather it is the warm, pulsing recital of a tale of love, a

love so great and supreme that it is measured by the most stupendous outpouring of suffering possible to a human being.

Some might object to Father Faber's style. There's no doubt about it: this is a product of its age, and it is markedly Victorian. Frequently it is verbose; at times it is flowery, over-ornate; at other times figures of speech are too precious. And over all there hovers a sweetness which can be distasteful. But these extremes in style are the natural products of an extremely fervent soul and a highly emotional nature.

Father Faber wrote this masterpiece as a Servite tertiary. It is to be hoped that Servites of today will strive as devotedly and as capably as he did to bring the Mother of Sorrows to a world bathed in sorrow.

Father Patrick McNamara, O.S.M., Carteret, N. J.

**I BELONG TO GOD: Great Truths in Simple Stories for Children and the Lovers of Children, by Mother Lillian Clark, Religious of the Cenacle. Drawings by Ernest King, J. S. Paluch Co., Chicago (Lumen Edition), 1956, 109 pp., 50 cents**

For a good many years Mother Clark's book has been an oasis in the desert to those teaching religion to preschool and primary children, especially First Communicants. Now it is available in Lumen Books, the fifty-cent Catholic paperbacks. The new edition carries a "blessing and a prayer" by Cardinal Spellman.

What is it all about? Well, in picture and story, mostly story, the reader meets Mother Clark's storybook characters, Jane and Jack. With Jane and Jack we learn the great truths of Revelation — the Creation, the Incarnation, the Redemption — all of which come back to the one, final truth: "I belong to God." Actually the proofs of St. Thomas told for tots!

This Cenacle nun knows little ones. She understands the quick flight of their minds, the appeal of simple things — a snowman, a bright ball, a gold locket, rhymes, airplanes. She weaves these into a story that holds the interest of young listener and older reader, a pretty story that teaches a child — actually teaches him — not only to love Jesus, but to pray to Him lovingly and interiorly within his little soul. A book that can do this for a child, needless to say, rejoices all devout hearts. One can only muse on how St. Teresa would have enjoyed it!

Mary Kiely, Providence, R. I.

THE GREAT PRAYER, by Hugh Ross Williamson, Macmillan, New York, 1956, 164 pp., \$3.25

In this compact treatise on the Canon of the Mass, a highly educated and talented convert has performed a signal service to worshippers seeking to make their participation in the Holy Sacrifice of the Mass more fruitful and spiritual. His exacting yet informal analysis is rich in historical and spiritual significance; it gives us a fresh look at our Mass, revealing in detail every aspect of the Canon's prayers. Beginning with the *Te igitur* on through to the *Per Ipsum*, the former Anglican clergyman gives a new insight for many of us into the central phase of the Mass.

In the *Communicantes* — to take an example — which many of us (I, for one) have been in the habit of intoning perfunctorily, we are awakened to the "Church Triumphant" as the diversely saintly characters are brought to life before us. We feel pride of kinship in this company of saints and martyrs; never again will we recite this beautiful prayer without there springing into our consciousness visions of heroic figures, the front ranks of the Church throughout the centuries.

A balancing prayer, as it were, is the *Nobis Quoque Peccatoribus*, where the priest for the only time in the canon speaks audibly. The essential function of the priest is emphasized here — to consecrate bread and wine so that they become Christ's Body and Blood. Williamson underlines the truth that nothing that a priest is or does can affect the sacrament. No one can be really worthy of performing this function — thus the *Nobis Quoque Peccatoribus*, originally a prayer for the ministers at the altar. In St. Paul's words: "God has chosen what the world holds weak so as to abash the strong."

To those of us blessed with strong faith, this book will serve to reinforce and reinvigorate. To those of us whose attitude toward the Mass has been one of mere compliance with the Church's commandments, Williamson's book will give a new insight into their worship, spiritual reawakening, as it were, opening new vistas in their religious life.

An interesting and informative sidelight is contained in the introduction where the priest's vestments and the accompanying prayers are discussed and explained.

David J. Concannon, Newport, R. I.

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